Mediascene

ISSUE 31-$1.75

STAR TREK
FILMING THE FINAL FRONTIER

ELLISON AND STERANKO IN
THE 3D FUTURE

MARVEL IN HOLLYWOOD
ROY THOMAS
INTERVIEWED

THE TV ART OF
JACK KIRBY

BREAKING INTO
COMICS

SABRE

HULK

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A SUPERGRAPHICS PUBLICATION

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If anyone tells you that "comics are better than ever," don't believe anything else they say.

Why not?

Because they don't know the meaning of "ever." Generally, every aspect of comics production has decreased over the years: technically (although printing standards have increased in the last decade) the use of plastic plates, instead of metal ones, has resulted in inferior reproduction of art work and color; paper stock is of poorer quality; the books have shriveled in size cutting editorial matter to shocking and outrageous proportions, while prices have accelerated at an astonishing rate.

Aside from these factors (all of which are of major importance in comic production), the sheer quality of the books has diminished to an alarming low. From my point of view, there appears to be one basic reason—fan artists, writers and editors who have not yet learned their craft are producing the majority of comic books today. These books are weak in plot, if indeed, any plot is to be found at all. Dialogue is tuneless, unimaginative, repetitive. Characterization is non-existent. Art is a rehash of old Adams, Kirby, Buscema, Kubert styles of a decade ago. Storytelling is pathetic, laughable.

All this, however, may still be acceptable, even palatable to the current readership weaned on creeping mediocrity. What is *not* acceptable is the morbid preoccupation with death and destruction that began poisoning a few books in the late 60s, and has since become an epidemic.

The fallen hero began as a dramatic device, and has since been elevated and developed into a major theme by irresponsible creators more interested in cheap, obvious thrills and self-indulgent whims, than in entertaining the public readership. The recent DC cut-back reflects this fact with dynamic and indisputable certainty. Comic readers simply do not want to see their heroes beaten, bruised, battered and bloodied.

As one of the brotherhood of comic artists and a historian of the form, I hope that the current failures will point the way to a clearer understanding of the material and the market. If not, then comics as we know them, will probably disappear like their counterparts of the 30s, the pulp magazines.

To complicate matters, the comic industry is currently undergoing a revolution regarding ownership and rights to material being produced for the books. Page rates, especially for artists, are depressingly low in comparison with comparable work completed for the advertising field. Small wonder then that comics are in the shape they're in—inferior rates attract inferior talent.

The comic industry *can* afford to shell out higher rates, especially to the real creators—the ones whose characters have been translated to film and TV, or licensed for games, toys and other merchandise. This additional income should be shared—and could be the basis for an impressive incentive plan.

It was just a few years ago that publishers began to give a small token payment for reprints. And why not—every reprint represents a potential loss for some artist and writer. But The System is still far from equitable.

About a year ago, Marvel called to determine if I had stats or originals from certain pages I had done for them six or seven years ago. The number of pages was considerable, and I inquired if Marvel would spring for the expense of recopying the stats. The girl said she'd have to check it out. I told her there was no way I'd foot the bill.

Several days later, she phoned again, agreeing to the charges. When I inquired what the stats were to be used for, she admitted she wasn't sure. I tossed back through the chain of command until I got the answer: the stats were needed for a European publisher who wanted to produce a book of my old SHIELD tales. I was quite pleased by the idea, and asked about my residual rates.

There were none.

It was explained to me that residuals were only paid for American reprints, not foreign. I failed to see that geography had anything to do with residuals, and asked for a third of the money Marvel would be paid for the rights to do such a book. Impossible! Out of the question!

I figured that even if it was a thousand dollars, it was better than nothing. Hell, even if it was only a hundred! But, they said no, and I never delivered the stats that were necessary for the book. We both lost. Several months afterward, the foreign publisher, an old friend of mine, revealed the fact that he had wanted to do the book. I explained the situation in detail, upon which he exploded in several lively French phrases, none of which I knew—but his meaning was *quite* clear, nonetheless.

There seemed to be no real reason for the incident, except that it would set a precedent, one which would eventually involve sharing foreign profits with creators.

I don't necessarily mean to paint a dark portrait of all publishers; they're in business to turn a profit, just like everyone else. When I worked at Marvel, it was owned by Martin Goodman, and, though he was probably one of the busiest men in Manhattan, he never failed to greet me in an office or a hallway with a "Hey, Steranko, are you still drawing those wild books for me? Keep it up!"

Those were the days when the company would send a check for a Christmas bonus—believe me, it was appreciated. Even more impressive was the fact that Mr. Goodman would send an *additional* check—a substantial one—made out personally. That's special.

I must confess that Stan Lee, too, was always generous with page rate raises, considering some of the primitive material I gave him in those days. Yet, if he liked it, he wouldn't hesitate to show his approval and appreciation in a very sympathetic and winning manner—a raise in pay.

Our field of disagreement was over matters such as unusual plotlines, experimental storytelling and expensive special effects—and, of course, the return of original art, a continuing battle that raged throughout my tenure with Marvel. Stan's final words on the subject were, "If you ever get your art back, never let me know about it!"

I never did.

And I can't tell you about it either—until I'm certain that the statute of limitations has run out.

During those few years, all checks issued at Marvel in payment for work completed would carry a rubber-stamped statement requiring the bearer to relinquish all rights to his work upon *cashing* the check. I got into the habit of crossing out the statement before I took it to the bank, nullifying the agreement.

These tactics are not new, and certainly not exclusive to the comic business. Years ago, when magazines were selling in the millions, publishers scrambled to beat out their competition in much the same way that it's still being done today. True Magazine was carving a substantial niche in the line-up of men's books, striving repeatedly to top not only their former accomplishments, but those of the rival magazines as well.

The opportunity had arisen at one point to snare a Hemingway story, and a Hemingway story was not only a circulation builder, but an impressive political coup, for authors of his caliber generally found their way into the more expensive, slick magazines.

True waved the story very much, and decided they would go as high as $9,000 for the material. They dispatched one of their editors to make the deal, exposed their fingers and sat back to wait for the decision. It came several hours later when the editor returned. He had secured the rights for the story—but at a staggering $5,000!

Talk about ambivalence—the staff cheered the deal, and groaned under the weight of the tab. Something would have to be done, it was decided after the smoke cleared, to recover the expenditure—perhaps by running the story a second time in True Annual, a collection of the best fiction from the monthly magazine. Most material was purchased with *unlimited* reprint rights, and, of course, True was careful to be sure to include that statement stamped on their check to Hemingway.

When the Annual finally appeared, a note was received from Hemingway appreciative of the fact that they had chosen his work for reprint in the book, but that he had not gotten another check. True immediately sent off a polite letter stating that Hemingway *had failed* to read the notice stamped on the original check, and in cashing it, had obviously agreed to its terms. Everything seemed to be cool until a short while later when another letter arrived from Hemingway:

"Gentlemen: Thank you for the note. I did not fail to read the reprint notice stamped on your original check. I never cashed it. Please send your man (name) immediately, so that we may settle this matter amiably."

The man was sent immediately as the story goes.

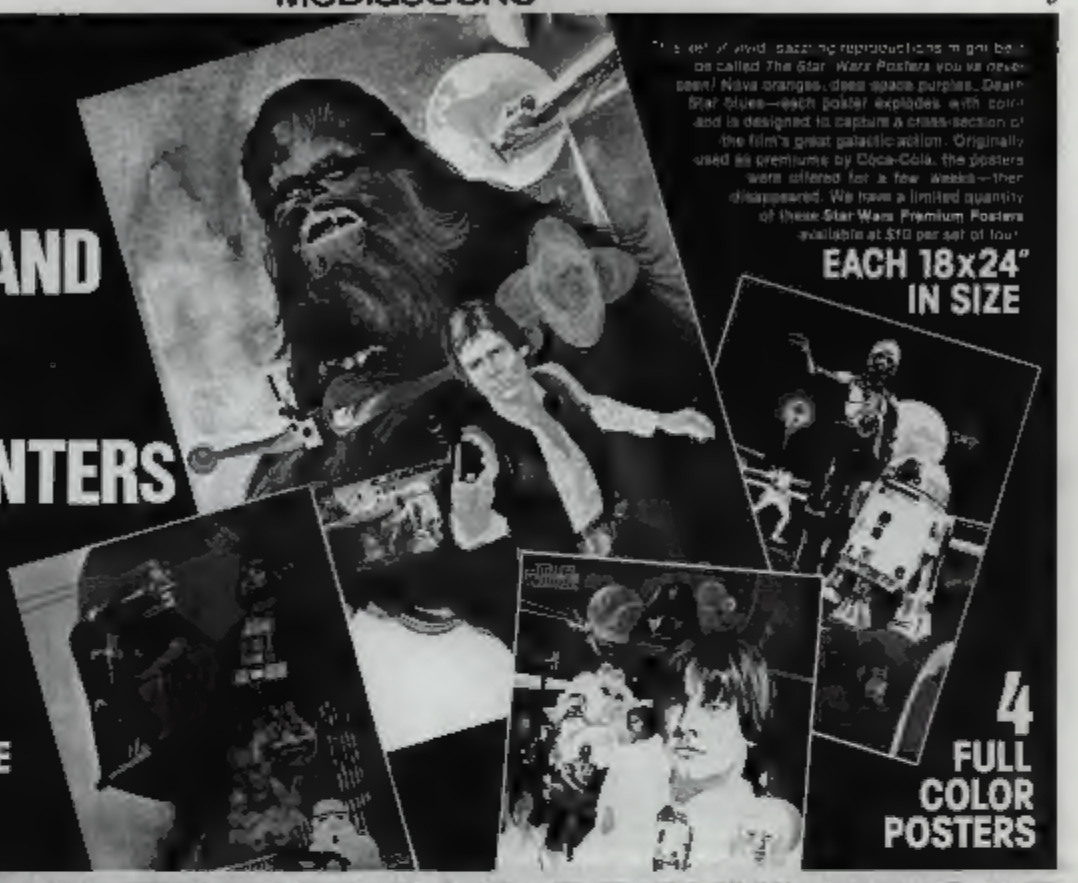
You'll find more about the conflict between creators and publishers and how it all relates to you in this issue—along with a host of pictorial features that range from film to comics. Good reading.

Take care.●

STERANKO

NEW! STAR WARS AND OTHER SPACE ENCOUNTERS

FANTASTIC VOYAGES BEYOND TIME AND ETERNITY BY TODAY'S TOP SCIENCE FICTION ARTISTS!



...ew, vivid, dazzling reproductions you've got to see (to call *The Star Wars Posters* you've never seen! Nova oranges, deep space purples. Death Star blues—each poster explodes with color and is designed to capture a cross-section of the film's great galactic action. Originally used as premiums by Coca-Cola, the posters were offered for a few weeks—then disappeared. We have a limited quantity of these **Star Wars Premium Posters** available at $10 per set of four.

EACH 18x24" IN SIZE

4 FULL COLOR POSTERS

CODY FANTASY EPIC ACTION VISIONS

RETURNS IN WILD CHAYKIN THRILLER

Cody Starbuck—space jockey extraordinaire—is back once again, in his own all-new 44-page full-color comic novel from Star*Reach Publications. Written, illustrated and colored by Howard Chaykin, this latest **Cody Starbuck** adventure is packed with rocketships and raygunz, and unrestricted by censors and the comics code. It's a tale of intergalactic intrigue and action in a galaxy where science and religion have formed an alliance of corruption and destruction, populated by genetic mutations and lush temptations. From the artist who drew **Empire** and **Star Wars**. $2.00.

MAGIC AND MENACE IN FULL-COLOR EPIC

Parsifal is Craig Russell's comic format adaptation of a epic operatic plot originally conceived by Richard Wagner, and now another new full-color publication from Star*Reach. **Parsifal** is a three-part tale, whose first two chapters appeared originally in black and white in **Star*Reach** 8 and 10. Both episodes are collected now under one cover, along with the never-before-published concluding segment, *all in vibrant full-color*. **Parsifal** is a superb example of fine comic art, rendered with care, attention to detail, and an aesthetic eye for quality for just $2.00.

BOOK 8 JUST PUBLISHED!

In **The First Kingdom**, artist and writer Jack Katz has created a sweeping mythos of savagery, conquest and triumph on a scale undreamed of by Tolkein, Howard and Lovecraft. Katz undertakes to present his epic vision on a broad and revolutionary scale—a 24-book-long saga of global destruction, colonization from the stars, the rebirth of civilization and the victory of reason over chaos throughout the universe. Katz literally crams every page with supercharged energy, excitement and abundantly detailed artwork. **The First Kingdom's** opening chapters are available now, for just $1.00.

WOLVERTON'S WEIRD CLASSICS

SEE the giant homosaur with the Plutonian brain! *MARVEL* at the moons of Mars on a collision course with their homeworld! *THRILL* at the spectacle of hordes of aliens in raging battle with giant space armadas! *WONDER* whatever could have induced artist/writer Basil Wolverton to create such extraordinary, bizarre and unearthly visions of extraterrestrial life over 35 years ago in **Target Comics**. **Spacehawk** is 64 pages of black and white artwork, six classic stories collected in one volume for the first time. Spaced-out entertainment, with a full-color cover, for $3.95.

OF SCIENCE-FICTION AND DARK FANTASY

Imagine—a brand new 44-page publication from the creators of **Star-Reach**, featuring *eight* full-color pages and covers in *every* issue, for just $1.50 each. **Imagine**—1 contains explosive contributions by Neal Adams, Dave Sim, Marshall Rogers, Frank Cirocco and Richard Larson. **Imagine** 2 features the beginning of a new fantasy serial *Avatar*, in dazzling full-color by Craig Russell, along with stories and art by Lee Marrs, Mike Vosburg, Gene Day, Trina, Steve Leialoha and more. **Imagine** 3 continues the Craig Russell color story, and offers a wide selection of styles and artists.

FILMING THE FINAL FRONTIER

Star Trek returns!

After a decade of anticipation by its legions of followers, **Star Trek** is back! Paramount Pictures is calling the cinematic revival of **Star Trek** "the most widely anticipated film event in years" and, perhaps, justifiably so. The coming resurrection of the **Star Trek** phenomenon is embodied in a major Hollywood film budgeted in the vicinity of $15 million, titled **Star Trek — The Motion Picture**, which began production in late July.

Star Trek, the television series created and produced by Gene Roddenberry, originally premiered on September 8, 1966, and still stands as one of the most extraordinary happenings in the history of television programming. Although the show lasted for only three seasons, **Star Trek** was not allowed simply to lay back and die after its cancellation. It was kept alive and vital through a flood of licensed merchandise, comic books, conventions and a Niagara of mail by hard-core fans, called "Trekkies" or "Trekkers," to Paramount and the NBC-TV network. Now, after much indecision on the part of Paramount executives—should **Star Trek** return as a television series, a television movie, a theatrical motion picture? — the contracts have all been signed and there's no turning back.

Star Trek—The Motion Picture is now solidly before the Paramount cameras, being produced by the man who started it all, Gene Roddenberry, and directed by four-time Academy Award winner Robert Wise.

"Science-fiction always has intrigued me," Wise confessed, "as has man's history-making adventures into space. One of my favorite quotations is from Charles A. Lindbergh's **Autobiography of Values**. It reads, 'The growing knowledge of science does not refute man's intuition of the mystical. Whether, outwardly or inwardly, whether in space or time, the farther we penetrate the unknown, the vaster and more marvelous it becomes.'"

Wise is certainly no newcomer to the science-fiction genre. Among his credits are the prestigious message films **The Day the Earth Stood Still** and **The Andromeda Strain**. His long list of movie projects spans the full range of subject matter, from horror to musicals, but **Star Trek — The Motion Picture** could very well be his most challenging and exciting project to date.

One of the primary concerns among **Star Trek** followers, however, was not necessarily the choice of the project's director, but its cast. Whatever form the **Star Trek** project took, the major appeal carried over from the original TV series was admittedly in the characters that kept the great starship *Enterprise* on "her five-year mission to explore new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before." And what made those characters so endearing to the series' fans were the actors who played those roles. Of specific concern was the uncertainty as to whether or not the show's two leading performers, William Shatner (as Captain Kirk) and Leonard Nimoy (as Mr. Spock), would reprise their roles in the motion picture.

When the announcement was made on March 26, 1970 at a press conference at Paramount Pictures that **Star Trek** would return as a major motion picture, it was also made known that the *entire* original cast would be reunited. Back in their original roles were not only Shatner and Nimoy, but also De Forest Kelley (as Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy), James Doohan (Montgomery "Scotty" Scott), George Takei (Sulu), Nichelle (Uhura) Nichols, Walter Koenig (Chekov) Majel Barrett (Christine Chapel) and Grace Lee Whitney (Janice Rand).

"I have always felt that somehow we would be back together," Shatner confessed, "Regardless of what I was doing, or where my career was taking me at the moment, I knew Captain Kirk was not behind me. He always remained very important to my future life, and work."

Nimoy's participation in the new **Star Trek** project, however, was always more tenuous than Shatner's. After a number of published announcements that he would not be associated with the new **Star Trek**, whatever form it would take, the actor finally agreed to recreate the half-human, half-Vulcan role which made him the most popular character from the original series.

© 1978 Paramount Pictures

"The first time we were together," said Nimoy, "I think we all sensed a very rare chemistry among us—great care must have been in taken choosing each individual for his or her role. When we met again for the motion picture—and I'm sure I can speak for all of us—we felt that same warmth for each other, and strong attachment for our roles. I would not have wanted **Star Trek** to have been made without Mr. Spock, and I wouldn't have wanted anybody else to be playing Mr. Spock."

Even though **Star Trek—The Motion Picture** has brought together the entire television cast, it also introduces some new blood. Stephen Collins, with an impressive stage and screen career behind him, plays Commander Willard Decker, the new Executive Officer aboard the *Enterprise*. Decker is described as an embittered sort of character who has had to surrender his current command of the *Enterprise* to its former captain, James T. Kirk. Also, Decker exhibits a strange attraction for yet another new addition to the starship's crew, the extraterrestrial beauty, Ilia.

Ilia (pronounced Eye-lee-ah) is, like Mr. Spock, an alien. But rather than hailing from Vulcan, she is a native of the planet Delta. Ilia is an exotically beautiful woman, completely hairless (as are all the women on her native world), who now serves as a Navigator Lieutenant on the *U.S.S. Enterprise*. The character is played in the film by olive-skinned Persis Khambatta, a former Miss India and one of her native country's leading models and actresses. For her role as the highly sensual Deltan, Ms. Khambatta volunteered to have her head completely shaved, which allows her to make a striking debut appearance on the American motion picture scene.

Star Trek—The Motion Picture is being filmed from a screenplay by Roddenberry and Harold Livingston, based upon an original story by science fiction author Alan Dean Foster, who had already written a number of **Star Trek** paperback novels based on the animated cartoon series. Though little has been revealed about the actual plotline of the film, sources have provided the following information about the movie's basic premise:

In a sector of space patrolled by the hostile Klingons, three powerful Klingon spaceship encounter a being unlike anything ever known in the universe of the 23rd century. The Klingons' ships are equipped with the most modern and devastating of weapons, but even these prove ineffective against this space-intruding entity. The being attacks each Klingon ship in turn, destroying them instantly.

The annihilation of the Klingon ships startles Starfleet members on monitor duty at station Epsilon 9. Yet the destruction of three enemy craft is only the beginning. It soon becomes apparent that this unknown entity is moving toward Federation space at a speed of Warp 7 and is on a collision course with Earth. Epsilon 9 transmits the information to Starfleet headquarters in San Francisco.

For the first time, viewers will actually get to see Starfleet's terran headquarters, as Captain James T. Kirk is called upon to once again assume command of the *Enterprise*. The starship has been completely rebuilt since its earlier missions and is now equipped with the finest weapons technology that the Starfleet scientists can design.

Back at the *Enterprise* helm, Kirk is joined by his former crew. Only Mr. Spock and "Bones" McCoy are missing from the old group, some of whom have been promoted since we last saw them in action ten years ago. A somewhat grumpier McCoy is eventually beamed aboard the starship, just before the *Enterprise* leaves its orbital drydock high above Starfleet headquarters. McCoy apparently has no real desire to be either brought back into active duty or be beamed onto a spacecraft.

Soon afterward, Spock himself makes his appearance aboard the *Enterprise*. But it is a subtly different Spock, more distant in his behavior than he has ever been before. (Rumor has it that the pointy-eared hybrid has somehow tapped into a mysterious "force" since his—and George Lucas'—last excursion into deep space.)

The crew, after having mastered the advanced weapons and equipment, streak inexorably through Warp Drive, while ahead, rushing toward both them and the Earth, is the unknown alien.

And that is the basic storyline of **Star Trek—The Motion Picture**. As to the nature of the mysterious all-powerful alien, Paramount is maintaining a self-satisfied silence, but it seems as if something no less

awesome than a deity gone berserk will suffice in this multi-million dollar space epic.

The film's theme and approach will ironically be one familiar to viewers of the **Star Trek** television series, but certain updatings and refinements were made to meet the standards of the 1970s.

The new *Enterprise* has been re-designed by Mike Minor after months of work, and sets were made by Maurice Zuberano, Minor and Rick Sternbach.

A new Command Bridge has been built for the starship with working, technologically-advanced instruments. Major, highly-detailed, sets have been reconstructed, including the Transporter Room, the Sickbay, and enormous Engineering Deck and individual quarters for Kirk and Spock.

Outside the *Enterprise*, viewers will be taken aboard shuttlecraft, Klingon ships, a sky-based orbital drydock and Spock's home world of Vulcan.

Robert Abel & Associates, in cooperation with Richard Taylor and Con Pederson (the latter a special effects supervisor on **2001: A Space Odyssey**), are creating the special visual effects, which will require a year in production.

Will Captain Kirk and his *Enterprise* stalwarts, armed as they'll be with every new improvement afforded by a $15 million budget, be able to win their battle with their new and godlike adversary? Somehow, after surviving the network-imposed "death" of series cancellation, we feel they'll manage. But to know for certain, we'll have to wait until August 1979, which is the projected date that Paramount has set to release their BIG one for that year, **Star Trek—The Motion Picture**.

Don Glut

ILLUSTRATIONS: A) Mr. Spock B) Captain Kirk C) on the set with director Wise (standing left) and Roddenberry (standing center) D) all principal cast members.

A

B

C

D

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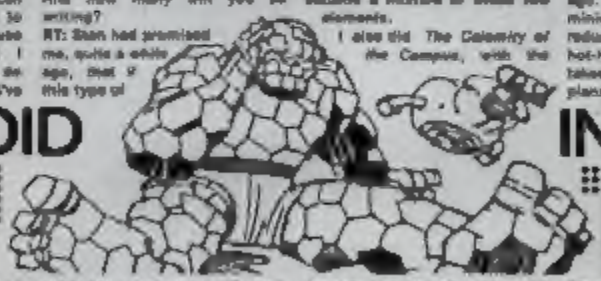
LOOK OUT! HE'S AS DANGEROUS AND DEADLY AS A CUTLASS BLOW...AS VIOLENT AS A RAZOR SLASH... AND HE'S HERE... NOW!

Cutting a bloody swath through the deception and villainy of some far-future, **Sabre** is an all-new creation by two of comics' most controversial contributors. As **Sabre**'s writer and creator, Don McGregor brings his unrestrained skills to bear on a tale of rebellion and personal outrage against an unfeeling, machine-ized world of hypocrisy. Artist Paul Gulacy brings the words to breathtaking life, visually packing each page with his own cinematic brand of action and excitement. Together, they tell **Sabre**'s 52-pages with daring and revolutionary new approaches to comics that neither DC nor Marvel would ever dare to print. Printed on high-quality vellum paper with a color wraparound cover painting, **Sabre** also features two spectacular double-page panoramas, and the highest production standards possible. **Sabre** is a powerful and important milestone in the careers of McGregor and Gulacy, [illegible]

A CANDID INTERVIEW WITH Jim Shooter



Hollywood—bright lights, movie stars, fame, fortune...Roy Thomas?

When Roy stepped down from his position as Marvel Comics' Editor-in-Chief in January 1975, he moved to California. Cryptic rumors filtered back to the East Coast that a Conan movie project was in the works.

Three and a half years later, Roy is still writing comics, three thousand miles away from Marvel's offices, and, after a few unforseen delays, his Hollywood career is finally gaining momentum.

"It took me a while to get organized in California, and I had to get my priorities straight. To break into TV or films, you just have to sit down and write a half-dozen scripts on spec—they'll probably never sell, but they show that a writer can handle the format. I'm used to getting paid for writing, because that's my profession, but I realize now that I'll have to do those scripts sometime. I've worked hard for over 10 years at comic page rates, and now it's time to try to move up in the writing world, whether it's in film, TV or animated cartoons."

Roy talked about his plans and projects with **MEDIASCENE** while in New York as Guest of Honor at the July Comic Convention. The range of topics was broad, but centered mostly on the subject of Marvel in Hollywood, starting with the upcoming **Fantastic Four** series slated for Saturday mornings this fall.

RT: There's a lot I don't really know about the technical, financial details behind the FF series, but there is apparently some sort of business arrangement that involves both Marvel and DePatie-Freleng in a partnership of sorts.

I believe Marvel wanted to buy out DePatie-Freleng at one time, but that situation changed. I don't think it's a licensing deal either, because Marvel has a lot of control over the show's content. For example: Stan's very first script, titled *A Monster Among Us*, was essentially a retelling of the infant Terrible story from FF 34—you know, the monster is really a baby, and its mother shows up threatening to destroy Earth from her flying saucer. A good, simple, easy-to-understand story, typical Lee-Kirby.

Well, somebody rewrote the script that Stan turned in, and he hit the roof. Stan went straight to the NBC executives to find out what was going on, and got them to agree not to tamper too much with the stories. It seems that may felt the material was good, but a little too melodramatic. Stan felt, however, that they were watering the ideas down until the FF looked like they did when Hanna-Barbera produced the series about ten years ago.

Now the thing to understand is that NBC bought the FF series from DePatie-Freleng/Marvel with the understanding that Stan Lee and Jack Kirby would be intimately involved with the writing and storyboards. They were the original series' creators and knew the material best, the subject matter was imaginative and totally alien to Saturday morning cartoons in form and concept, and both **Spider-Man** and **The Hulk** were doing well on CBS. Because of this, and Marvel's investment in the production, Stan had a certain leverage in dealing with NBC, and his script decision was important to his integrity, and eventually mine as well.

MS: Exactly how did you become involved with the series? And how many will you be writing?

RT: Stan had promised me, quite a while ago, that if this type of animation deal went through he would let me do a couple. Eventually, I got to do four, because Stan was flying out to Hollywood for a meeting, and DePatie-Freleng wanted some extra plots available for discussion. I immediately rushed them 18 plots by messenger, based on some of Stan's old comic book stories, hoping to edge my way in by providing the dialogue for them later. I've worked with Stan for a long time, so I knew his writing parameters, and felt sure he and I could agree on a way to at least collaborate in this manner.

MS: We've heard that NBC contracted for 16 shows. Are there any other writers involved besides Stan and yourself?

RT: Stan, of course has saved the majority of the writing for himself, and I was really surprised to get to do four this season. The only other writer involved is a young lady named Christy Marx, who helped in plotting a **Savage Sword of Conan** story.

MS: Are all the stories adaptations of comic plots, or are there original tales as well?

RT: Actually, it's a little bit of both, to varying degrees.

Of the four scripts I've submitted, two are adapted rather loosely from the comics, and two are collections of fragments from comics and original ideas.

I did the Impossible Man story, but with a lot of rewriting and an entirely new ending, because NBC didn't like the resolution that he simply gets bored with Earth and goes away—not enough action. Also, if you remember, he came down in the midst of a bunch of hobos, an idea I didn't like, and switched to a scene where he inadvertently falls into the lost company of a bunch of crooks. I thought it gave the Impossible Man a slightly more villainous aspect, rather than his simple-minded mischevious character.

Another story I did is a sort of Space Olympics, borrowing a gimmick from the '30s-style gangster story where the Skrulls kidnap the Thing to fight Tongo. I left the heads out of this story, and turned it into a type of Skrull war of gladiators, and added pieces of additional stories for scenes and gimmicks.

Yet another story is called *The Phantom of Film City*, the first they bought from me actually, which used as a springboard Stan's old idea about the FF going broke and making a movie. Someone at NBC suggested the Phantom of the Opera-type character, instead of the original Sub-Mariner, and the story became a mixture of those two elements.

I also did *The Calamity of the Campus*, with the Dragon Man, which along with the Impossible Man job, comes closer to the typical FF stories fans will recognize.

What I've seen of Stan's stories has been typical Lee material, mixing old plots and gimmicks; there's a story featuring Magneto, so Stan is crossing the lines, so to speak, with the villains and characters he knows best.

A SPECIAL BEHIND THE SCENES LOOK AT MARVEL IN HOLLYWOOD—WITH AN EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF JACK KIRBY'S NEW TV STORYBOARDS

MS: We understand that the Human Torch got lost somewhere on the way to this job. Is there a story behind that?

RT: Sure. First, Universal Studios bought him for a live action series of his own, like the Hulk, and planned to use him as a trouble-shooting race-car driver—which would be about the fourteenth variation on the Torch in Marvel's history.

The flames turned out to be a very expensive proposition to create, though, and then a story started circulating that somebody, somewhere, was worried that kids might start setting themselves on fire to emulate him. This story, by the way has been around since Hanna-Barbera put out the first series of **Fantastic Four** cartoons.

Anyway, true or not, this idea is present, and I feel that even if the Human Torch had been available, NBC would have felt uncomfortable with him. So as a replacement, we got Herbie the Robot.

MS: Who's idea was that?

RT: Probably a combination of Stan and David DePatie.

Herbie has no origin, and the Torch is never even mentioned. The name is really an abbreviation for something like Humanoid Electronic Robot that Beats Up Indigent Elephants—obviously I'm not sure what exactly. In the beginning he was called Charlie, but someone else had already licensed a robot under that name for merchandising.

In a way, Herbie underscores the essential structure of the Fantastic Four. Reed was the brains; the Thing was brute force; Sue was emotion; and the Torch was undisciplined brash ego. Now, with Herbie as a minicomputer robot, Reed is redundant, and we have an hot-head making foolish mistakes for plot hooks. But, the plans are already underway to license little Herbie toys, so we will all live with him.

Actually, he's not a bad character to have around, because he's typical and breaks the monotony that's becoming ingrained in seeing the same four characters for over 15 years. He flies around on his own little rockets and all, but he's more the stay at home type—assists johns, creates fantastic machines.

MS: Will he be pushed into the comics?

RT: Probably just enough to establish his presence, rather the way Gerry Conway had to introduce the Spidey-Mobile. Then everyone simply forgot about it, or it kept breaking down.

MS: At best, we'll only be able to bring a sampling of Kirby's work on the storyboards, so could you tell us what his general approach is to the work, and how it is being received?

RT: That's tough, because I've seen film storyboards, but never really studied them, so I don't know how Jack's technique compares to the norm.

He works on a grid-page, divided into six TV-shaped squares, horizontal format. I personally feel that he has grasped the technical requirements of storyboarding for TV: almost no foreshortening, limited overlapping characters, little motion from foreground to background—things they just cannot afford to do anymore. He often violates the little squares and runs two together for panoramas and tracking shots, trying to stretch the medium to fit his ideas.

Occasionally he will go overboard on the action/violence or imaginative gimmickry that would take too long to animate. Jack may actually be doing a little less work per panel now and nuances in characters. You know that feeling you get when you can say, "Wow this stuff's OK, but you should see the *really* good material." Well, that's how I felt, because I've been a fan of Jack's for 20 years, and I knew that these people had never seen Kirby from the 40s, 50s, and 60s. I tried to tell them that this work, as fine as it is, just didn't compare to the really wild Kirby in comic books, where he was full-pages, double-pages, color, that nice 50s Ketcham technique, and Joe Sinnott's clean inking.

The DePatie-Freleng people were also amazed at all the effort he put into every panel—they're used to stick figure constructions—and the fact that he could deliver an entire storyboard sequence in ten days. They use about 80 boards per show, six panels per board, which is roughly equivalent to six comic book pages per day. Because of the remarkable nature of Kirby's devotion to drawing, this didn't particularly knock me out—I've heard stories of Jack turning out nine and ten pages per day, much more detailed than the current work.

Actually, Kirby has moved into the animation field quite nicely, and seems to be satisfied with the money. Also, the pressure is on, because everybody is behind schedule for the Fall season. A lot of this work, and shows like the **Godzilla Hour** or **Pacer**, were supposed to be completed already, but nobody is even close to completion of their 13 or 26 episodes. Luckily, since Jack has boarded up a job, I can supply the words in a day or so.

MS: Do you see any indication that Jack may abandon comics altogether? Films have always influenced him—his approach has sometimes applied movie technique to the printed page.

NOW THAT
HE'S SEEN
YOU...PRAY
THAT HE'S
ON YOUR SIDE
DAN ADKINS

© 1978 Marvel Comics and DePatie-Freleng

RT: Jack plays everything close to his vest, so I can't really give you an answer. I can remember asking him the title of *Devil Dinosaur* two weeks before it was released in San Diego last year, and he gave me the standard "Well, I do my best, and I hope you like it." I don't mean to make fun of Kirby, but that's the kind of guy he is.

Let's face it, there are no over-riding reasons why Jack should return to comics. He's in his 60s now, and he's already proved his comics ability. Animation is a new, more lucrative life. It seems as if he's gone back to his roots, because he started out as an in-betweener on **Betty Boop** and **Popeye** cartoons, only now he's like a film director, and there's very little in-between work being done anymore. Personally, I don't think he'll retire—he may cut back drastically—but never completely abandon comics. I don't know if he'll work for Marvel, DC or overseas, but comics are the canvas on which Jack has drawn his life, and the form and format seem to be entrenched in his soul.

MS: How is everybody approaching the raw violence that is so much a part of the Marvel Universe?

RT: With kid gloves. We're simply not doing it. The Thing cannot hit anyone, man, beast or monster. In *The Phantom of Film City*, I had the Thing punch a robot, and that was out.

MS: But part of the Marvel image is the action and contemporary settings—New York is demolished every issue, and the Thing flexes long pants, kicks over fire hydrants, punches the walls out of buildings..."It's clobberin' time!"

RT: NBC would definitely frown on that sort of action.

MS: So what does **The Fantastic Four** do to keep kids interested?

RT: I think they get together and play a lot of bridge. I don't really know.

There is a lot of motion—running around chasing monsters, being chased by monsters, Sue falling out of the Fantasticar and into the monster's arms—she always was a little accident prone. Every once in a while the Army turns up, but they aren't allowed to have guns or tanks, they just rely on friendly persuasion I suppose.

I'll admit, it does get a little silly at times, seeing all these marvelous Kirby storyboards being replaced with scratchy stick figures because an expression is too fierce or there's an explosion called for, or—[redacted] forbid—a fistfight. I did a little bit in *The Phantom of Film City* that involved the Skrulls popping out of the shadows with ray-guns, very clearly explaining that they were only **Star Trek** stun weapons, and the word came down: "No guns of any kind!"

I used the word "kill" once, and that was a definite no-no, so I've wiped it out of my cartoon vocabulary—really guys, I won't do that anymore.

It's easy to gripe, but I don't want to sound like I'm really blaming anyone in particular or feel persecuted. I grew up with Walt Disney and Warner Bros. full animation, but that era died about twenty years ago. There's a lot of pressure being put on DePatie-Freleng from NBC Standards and Practices—the censors—who are being criticized and attacked by the PTA and Action for Children's Television and who knows what else?

I found out about this first hand over the phone during a three-way conversation with David DePatie and the NBC censor, who was complaining about all the arguing in the show—the typical FF bickering and byplay. They didn't like the way the Thing was threatening to tear apart Herbie, and equated it with sibling rivalry. They view the FF as a nuclear family unit with Reed and Sue as the parents, and the other two are the children—a boy and a whatever. So rather than promote sibling rivalry, we now refer to all such interchanges of words as "good-natured teasing," even though the basic words and attitudes are almost exactly the same. I've simply readjusted my thinking a little to make sure that all such "joshing" is harmless.

I look upon the problem the way I do as the Comics Code: there are rules you must follow if you want to find work, and I do enjoy both the money and the experience of scripting these shows. Honestly, you couldn't show **Star Wars**, even with all the PG scenes edited out, under Saturday morning standards. Yet, a little more of the flavor of the early **Fantastic Four** comics seems to come through simply because of Jack's storytelling, and Stan's and my own writing. Certainly much more than the old Hanna-Barbera series ever did.

MS: Will the **FF** be called upon to fight the insidious mutant litterbugs from outer space or any of those pseudo-morality plays that generally come off as just plain silly?

RT: I know what you mean, and the Impossible Man may fit in there somewhere, but as a rule, we're not pursuing the kind of story where everyone stops and holds a self-awareness seminar.

I do try to inject a little moral message in my scripts, just as Stan always has, and they seem to like that. The Space Olympics story has me Thing and an alien monster fighting, because the Skrulls and their enemies can't even trust their own men in the deciding battle, but by the end, everybody has to trust everybody else. You know, a moral here, a parable there. Stan is using his "things are not always what they seem" approach on the *Infant Terrible*.

MS: Has the decision been made on the casting of voices yet?

RT: I believe that Ted Cassidy will be doing the voice of the Thing, somewhat like Lurch with a slight chuckle in his throat. Too bad William Bendix isn't around, because he always had that throaty New Yorker voice that could really handle a line like "What a revoltin' development this is!" Other than that, however, I don't know who is doing Sue or Reed or anything right now.

GS: I think we all know what the financial and artistic limitations of TV animation are these days. Here, exactly, will this affect the Fantastic Four that we are used to seeing in the comics?

RT: Physically, everything is simplified. The Thing used to be a quarry of orange lumps—now he's down to three or four slab masses.

Reed Richards has a single white streak in his hair, right down the middle. And the last thing I heard about was the debate over the coloring of marble—orange clashes with the Thing, blue may be too drab, red was beating the voting pretty strongly.

Economy is the key word to remember. I wanted to do an underwater fight with a shark, but DePatie-Freleng told me that Universal was already perturbed about their Jabber Jaw or Master Jaws or whatever. So, I changed the shark to an octopus, but the viewer will only see it as a head and two tentacles above water—underwater scenes are tough to do, and eight arms are much too expensive and difficult to animate.

GS: Is there a significant crossover of audiences between the comics and the animated show, and will they be disturbed by marble and the changes?

RT: There is a crossover to a certain extent. But I know that even if the show fails miserably it will reach more people than the FF comic does in an entire year. That's simply the reality of the situation. I also think that the sheer volume of superheroes on TV will dull the sales of the comics rather than help them.

Stan has always felt that comics should give the reader stuff he can't find on the tube or in movies. Unfortunately, **Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica, Close Encounters** and all the TV series are doing comic book effects on an increasing scale and with a fantastic amount of sophistication. It's going to become tougher to sell 30 to 50 superhero books when it's all free on television. The proof of this is that when DC had to find 20 monthly comics worth saving recently, two were westerns, and a couple were war titles—material unavailable in any other visual form.

GS: To switch subjects slightly, what do you know about the live action Marvel heroes?

RT: I haven't really heard too much about the proposed series—if it's not in the works, it's in somebody's typewriter.

I do know that the people behind **Captain America** were not at all pleased with the idea of his being frozen in the ice for 20 or 30 years.

The Sub-Mariner just sort of swam away soon after **The Man From Atlantis** bombed out, although that may only be a temporary move until they come up with a "new" angle on the character.

GS: What happened to **The Hulk?** He started out as a soap opera, then turned around to become the comic book creation.

RT: The Hulk series is a good example of many Hollywood theories in practice.

First, there is a superiority complex that is automatically prejudiced against comics. Then there's the auteur factor, occasionally valid, which dictates that everyone who takes over a project immediately assumes that everyone else who ever touched it is an idiot. Finally, they didn't want to become another **Batman** craze, even though it was very successful, so they pushed for a more "adult" point of view.

The producer, Kenneth Johnson, has obviously changed his attitude towards the character, however, and has caught on to the larger than life quality that gives superheroes their charisma. The most un-Hulk characteristic about the TV-version is that he never battles monsters or super-villains. They feel that approach is a bit too childish, not to mention expensive. It's easier to keep him battling truckers and gangsters, which is actually a throwback to the 50s Superman series.

Super-villains also bring with them the opportunity for super-violence. I would imagine there were committees just waiting to pounce on the Hulk's comic Gamma-bomb origin. The TV version is more pacific for these people—he created himself, non-violently, and was punished for perverting science for personal gain.

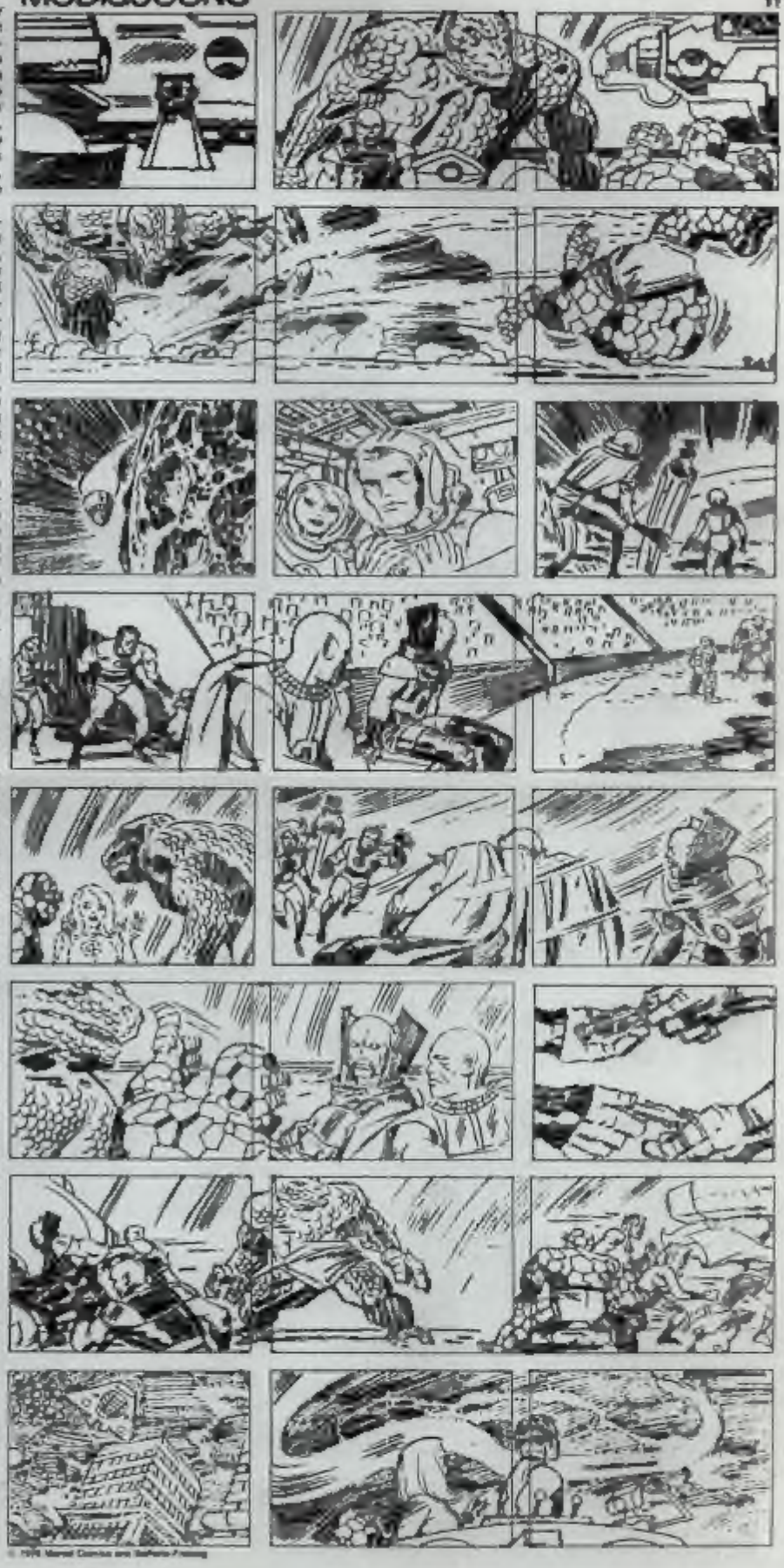
GS: Is anyone on the show really aware that they are essentially mimicking the comic book?

RT: I'm sure that some of them are, but I doubt they realize how much.

I was on the set of the pilot show, thanks to an assistant director friend, and he had described the characterization approach as "**The Fugitive**, with the Hulk as the one-armed man." Then, when Lou Ferigno came crashing through the plaster wall, green, raging, just like the comic version, I knew that they just can't or won't admit the way they were handling the Hulk.

Before the filming I had heard all sorts of stories, including one in which the Hulk was going to be colored gray, to separate him from the comic melodramatic approach. Well, when I heard this, I asked them: What did you buy in the first place? The Hulk is just a green man with lots of muscles. This isn't **War and Peace**, where the names are interchangable—**The Hulk** is **The HULK!!** I also told them about the original color screw-up in the original Hulk comic from the 60s. But what I really couldn't understand was the idea that, with color a primary concern in TV these days, they would actually opt for a drab grey. When Ferigno finally got on the set, however, he was a really brilliant green, because they played around with the rainbow until they "independently" decided this shade was best. So they wound up spending hundreds or thousands of dollars to arrive at a 15 year-old solution they could have bought for 35 cents.

SUR and all, **The Hulk** is a fairly good adaptation of comics to live-action TV. And in many ways he's more adult than **Spider-Man** or **Wonder Woman**.



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MB: And finally what about the Conan movie?

RT: Ed Summer was the one who got all that started when he interested Ed Pressman in the character. Then Pressman invested a lot of time and money in straightening out the Howard Estate tangle, so that Ace and Bantam could start issuing books and could adapt DeCamp and Carter stories in the comics.

MB: Does that mean you can do a Conan novel yourself now?

RT: No thanks, there are enough hands in the Conan pie already. Part of me would love to, but I'm more satisfied being the exclusive comic author. I'd rather do a Kull book and I'm an advisor on a Red Sonja series of novels for which I am well paid.

As for the movie, we had the contracts all drawn up. In fact they seemed a little too good to believe. In the area of $100,000. We had written a 70-page treatment that was very authentic, and dealt with the early period of Conan's life as a thief, troubadour and mercenary. For legal reasons, can't say much more other than the fact that it wasn't really based on any one story, but more of a saga of Conan's youth.

John Milius was to direct and probably would have done quite well considering the similar job he did on **The Wind and the Lion**. But he wanted a few months to consider the situation after the entire Conan project had been stalling around for two years.

The studio was very confused about what was going on and simply wanted to get into production. Then **Star Wars** came out and they started backing away at the screenplay as being too violent, they wanted a PG adventure. They don't understand sword & sorcery anymore than they did science-fiction before **Star Wars**, but they all know what they want — hundreds of millions of dollars profit.

Anyhow when Milius left, the studio wanted a bigger name for the screenplay so they hired Oliver Stone. Ed Summer knew him from film school and even though he hasn't had a film out yet somebody predicted he would be hot someday so the studio hired him.

I think Stone may do a more cinematic Conan but I'm afraid it will be less authentic. Half a script has been completed but I haven't seen it. Summer says that the biggest problem comes from all the Hyborian names, which are being mixed up out of chronology with the books.

The treatment that Ed and I worked on isn't being used although it could turn up as a later film. We were each paid several thousand dollars for a 70-page outline which is pretty good money for a few days work.

Schwarzenegger is being kept on retainer just so Milton Subotsky can't hire him to play Thongor. Of course the studio wants to get going, because they don't like paying actors who aren't working.

The film itself is budgeted between $10 and $15 million and they would like to see it in the theatres by 1980. Meanwhile Milius keeps flirting with news releases about returning to the film saying things like "It is the picture I was born to do" even though he may die first.

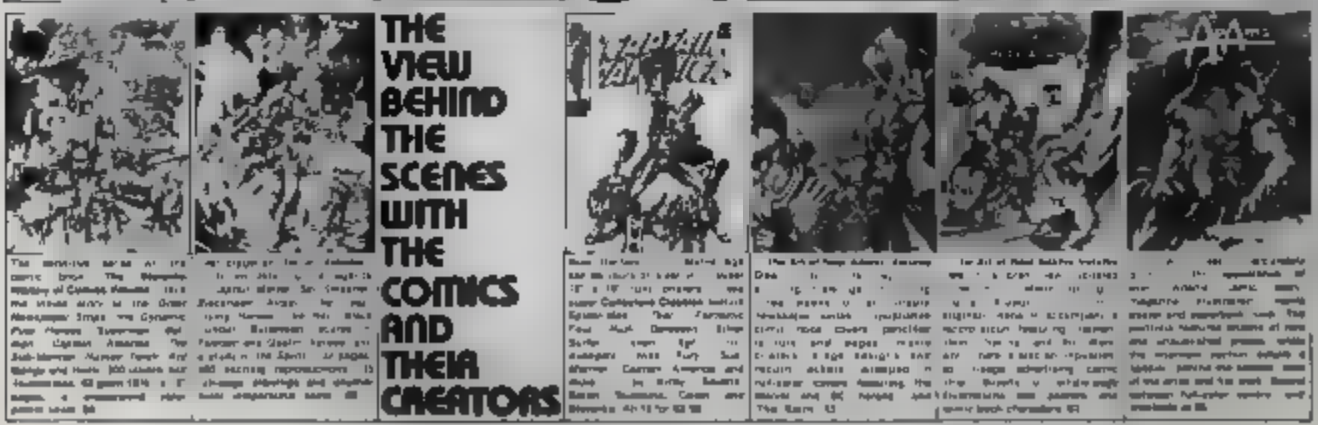
Everything is really in limbo right now and there's a lot of ways they could go wrong with sword & sorcery. This is a big project demanding lots of time, committment and special effects. I know that we did not want a Ray Harryhausen-type monster show but there is a real need for magic bolts and sorcerous effects.

MB: So what lies on the future as far as you and your career are concerned?

RT: I suppose I'll have to sit down and write those scripts one day. Meanwhile my relationship with DeFalco-Frelang has been quite good. They've been friendly and cooperative and explained all the rules to me so that I can meet their requirements. Find the animation work fun and I know that everybody would like to do other series based on the Marvel heroes such as Thor although he couldn't wear his hammer in his anything I've already proposed an impossible Man series to a few people.

In that respect the future will depend on how the FF series does, even if I do feel that considering all the restrictions Stan DeFalco-Frelang and must work under we will have the best Saturday morning show to come along in quite a while. Every plot character and action must be cleared with NBC but if we can bring superheroes to TV it just can be done. We've got an interest in the show creative input Stan, Jack and myself from the original comics and a lot of enthusiastic support not to mention Herbie the robot.

Interview conducted by Stevenka and Ken Bruzenak



THE COMIC CREATORS BEGIN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT

GUILDING THE COMICS

There are a million stories in the annals of comic book history. This is one such story too typical of the current industry and best appreciated if the reader puts himself in the shoes of the creator.

Picture yourself as a 58 year-old highly skilled and popular comic artist and writer. Comics have been your life's blood for 35 years and 24 of those years have been devoted exclusively to producing 9000 completely written, penciled, inked and lettered pages for a single character series of books. You have created 25 brand-new and original personalities for the company and are justifiably proud of your labors which have been printed around the world.

Then picture yourself unemployed.

After that picture yourself watching your own old work being reprinted endlessly in America and overseas without receiving a single penny in residuals. For over a year you receive no income from the company you once thought of as home, and your wife is forced to return to the job market.

There you have a realistic picture of the bleak situation currently being encountered by Fred Rhoads, the leading creator of the Sad Sack series of comic books published by Harvey Comics.

"I started in comics by assisting on the Beetle Bailey comic strip for three years and another year assisting on Beetle Bailey. I was employed by Harvey Comics, and in 1954 Al Harvey hired me to the Sad Sack line at $35 a page for the complete writing to lettering package. The exact same rate I received when I turned in my last panels in 1977. At one time I was creating 688 pages per year of new material for Harvey Comics, and the company was using reprints extensively at the same time. My work was very successful for Harvey, and they profited from it greatly.

Rhoads, who currently lives in Tucson, Arizona, has filed suit against Harvey Comics, claiming he is entitled to royalties on the reprints being released. His action is another in the increasing series of direct confrontations between companies and creators over the precise interpretation of copyright law.

As a Harvey employee, Rhoads could be legally considered "work for hire" and have no legal rights. But, as a freelance agent, he would, according to the letter of the law, have technically sold only the first North American publication rights, unless a specific agreement was signed to the contrary. That essentially is the point of contention. But there is a gaping chasm between the letter of the law and reality.

For decades, nearly all publishers have usurped not just North American rights from creators but *all rights* of any kind, anywhere in the world. Only within the last decade-and-a-half have writers and artists rebelled against this authoritarian practice, led primarily by pulp authors whose best-selling reprint fame gave them sufficient stature to challenge publishers for royalties and residuals.

Fred Rhoads' position is not uncommon however particularly in the comics because he was a long-standing member of the Harvey family, delivering a quarter-century of dedication and loyal work. "I was treated just like an employee. Al Harvey gave me a vacation pay, Blue Cross coverage and Christmas bonuses, so I thought I was an employee.

As the years passed into the 70s they assigned me less and less work, filling their books with reprints and their inventory with three-and-a-half years of my material. Over the years I have created many strong characters, such as General Rockjaw and Captain Saltsea, that have appeared regularly in the Sad Sack strip. In addition I have created over 25 characters at the request of my employers, Harvey Comics, such as Patrio Sack, Swampy Sack and Safari Sack, which have not been in print and are being inventoried for later use.

"Then, one day, they just stopped assigning me work. I was confused and without income, never expecting to be tossed so cruelly onto the scrapheap. It was at this time that I found out I was not an employee because I couldn't even file for unemployment compensation. But if I wasn't an employee, I have a right to negotiate for the foreign, domestic and reprint residuals, because I had no contract giving up those rights.

"In the meantime, I have absolutely no regular income. I deserve and expected better treatment than this inhumane dismissal, and have a right to royalties and all 9000 pages of original art which they never returned to me."

And so Fred Rhoads joins the swelling ranks of the disenchanted fighting in the courts for their rights and a small measure of human decency. Siegel & Shuster's Superman and John Albano's Jonah Hex have already gone before the bar and even Roy Thomas is disturbed at the way his Red Sonja creation is being sold and marketed without consulting him, let alone sharing a piece of the action.

Comic creators are not accepting the condescending approach as readily as they did after World War 2. Creators, not publishers or advertisers, were responsible for the Marvel Age's success.

There is a revolution in the wind but it is not the heroic flag-waving kind found in the pages of comics. It's a rough, vicious, greedy back-stabbing and opportunistic conflict being waged with sibling fervor between creators, publishers, accountants and lawyers. The creators may have justice, fair-play and God on their side, but they must also admit to an abysmal ignorance of the law for over 40 years. It is the law which publishers' lawyers will invoke in the battles of the courts, full of creators' ignorant, fearful, precedent-setting mistakes, and it is the law which is the final judge.

"Freelance agent" and "work for hire" are the two major points of contention, separating skilled artisans from hired servants in a world-wide rift between creators and their employers. Money is at the heart of the matter and the comic book industry is an excellent combination of literature and illustration with which to trace the evolution of the entire situation.

Before 1960 the creators position in the comic industry as well as most other businesses, was strongly dominated by the publisher's business acumen or lack of it. Every job was at the mercy of an editor's whim and if sales slipped, page rates were cut and artists fired. Some publishers were compassionate to their employees' desires, but it was always clear who controlled the ultimate destiny of the books and their creators.

In 1961 publisher Martin Goodman took a chance on a single book idea that his editor-head-writer/nephew, Stan Lee wanted to try. The Fantastic Four. The seeds of creativity were sown as they had been in 1938 when Superman was born, but on a much larger scale. The Marvel Age was born and proved conclusively that creators should be given a chance to control the growth of their own medium. For almost a decade, creators had free rein at Marvel, expertly guided by Stan's personal vision of a totally complete and fully-textured comic book universe. Sales grew as rates increased, the quality of art and writing reached incomparable heights with staggering consistency. The creators were happy. They had their freedom, but no knowledge of legal rights and copyright laws.

Then as the 70s approached the bean went sour. Merchandising became an increasingly important factor not to be trusted to flighty artists and writers; they should return to their submissive roles and be glad to receive work at all. The realities of spiraling inflation also began to attack the comic book industry with a vengeance, even as TV slashed vast inroads on comics readership, resulting in sheer sales.

To contemplate prices leapfrogged upwards, and valuable story pages were converted into ads. Printing technology and paper costs also conspired to tear apart the already reeling business. Mechanical advancements designed to facilitate production not only added to the financial strain, but actually lowered the quality of reproduction in less than ten years. The editorial content of a 32-page book plunged from 25 story pages to 17, even as the price more than tripled. And while the creators' artistic ability improved constantly the actual printing quality got worse and worse.

Somewhere along the way, comics lost their artistic value and became a commercial vehicle for selling juvenile toys and trinkets. The fact that the advertising was made possible only due to the sales generated by the artists' and writers' labors was casually ignored. When TV and film contracts entered the scene in the mid-70s, the situation became intolerable. Comic characters were worth millions of dollars to the parent company in licensing but their creators were deliberately not invited to join in the good fortune.

A recent front page headline in Variety, the weekly show-business trade-paper noted that, "The next cycle of big budget films will be centered on comic book characters and, in the process promoting billions of dollars of merchandising tie-ins. $25-$31 million are being tied-up with Dino DeLaurentiis' Flash Gordon alone and other films in the works include Popeye, The Phantom, Dick Tracy, Little Orphan Annie, Archie, Tarzan and Superman. Spider-man, Batman, Conan, Marmaduke and Prince Valiant are also being developed as feature possibilities.

TV has deals in works for Flash Gordon, Popeye, Marmaduke, Beetle Bailey, Little Orphan Annie, Buck Rogers, Casper, Dr. Strange, Hagar, Hi and Lois and Blondie.

According to Comic Code administrator Leonard Darvin, each year fully 225-250 million comics are sold in the US—that's a tremendous advantage to film makers. He also pointed out that most adults are familiar with comic lore, and were actually weaned on comics. If nothing else, Star Wars proved that comics-like characters appeal to adults as well as children.

The comic industry is a 75 to 80 million dollar-a-year retail business, according to Darvin with another 50 million generated by in-book ads. Publishers are reluctant to talk about merchandising revenues, which

are probably longer than the advertising insertio encompassing toys syndicated strips and games. Ed Harrison stated that 1978 TE licensing will tag their BE's Bermuda room and Marvel has reportedly netted a cool half-million for eight comic characters sold to CBS TV not including Spider Man.

With all the facts and more that have not been revealed yet it is evident that the comic book industry is horrified by creators demands for fair play and equal rights. The past and present system of doing business on comics is loaded in favour right down to its cigar distinctions between wealthy publishing barons and penniless starving serfs. From the publishers point of view this situation is perfectly all right and needs no changing. Please don't bother us while we're counting. There is a strong argument at this point given the current financial woes of the comic books that many artists should actually be given more AMEX. This would undoubtedly result in a much higher audience pleasing the publishers to hand over advertising rates claiming a larger market for the product to pay the printing bills and grey matter in the creators.

This mind around however comic creators are not accepting the condescending approach to readers as they did after World War 2 readers nor publishers or advertisers were responsible for the Marvel Age's success and most of the artists and writers can still taste the freedom of the 60s. There is also a new version of the copyright law in effect then can and should give readers a financial interest in what they produced a built in royalties plan recognized by everyone except the publishing industry in general.

This scenario of unrealistic creative disadvantages and legal entanglements has occurred in nearly every field of publishing with increasing regularity from Robert E. Howard's Conan to Gen Roddenberry's Enterprise. The willingness of publishers to hammer away at creators and each other has been going on much longer however reaching back to the turn of the century when there were two versions of The Katzenjammer Kids the 40's Superman Captain Marvel court battles and the only recently discontinued practice of publishers assuming ownership of original art they had no right to in the first place.

For decades, nearly all publishers have usurped not just [redacted] rights but all rights of any kind, anywhere in the world

All that has gone before has been merely practice however and the real battles are just beginning. The stakes are now the very heroes every company publishes the authority of the publisher and the legal rights of the readers with the possible consequences amounting to untold millions of dollars. The immediate outcome of the current legal arguments is not nearly as important as the precedent they may set but the readers seem to be in unanimous accord that the time for change has arrived.

The recent efforts of both DC and Marvel Comics to acquire complete authority over every phase of the creative process as reported in **MEDIASCENE** 36 and 38) have met with highly vocal and active opposition from readers every quarter. Neal Adams' ambitions towards creating a Comic Book Creators Guild have been graciously received by both consumer press and serious comic scholars.

Time and again Adams and his fellow supporters have stressed their intentions to help the industry if the editors can be more evenly distributed. There is no reason why a $30 million Superman movie should not return at least part of its profits to the writers and artists who made the character worth such an investment. Comic page rates are disproportionately low or nearly without the added means of living the same art to sell sculptures games and toys.

Rather than accept the idea that things could be improved through cooperation however the comic publishers have maintained a wall of resistance which has created tensions and aggravated many creators into outright hostile positions and unemployment. Many readers are literally caught in a position of desperation where they honestly want to make suggestions and improvements but find themselves up against companies which would rather hold their admin their fortunes fortunes which grow larger every year.

The shape of an these conflicting forces on the industry is too obvious to ignore. DC has at least almost 40 percent of the output and is within the 65 page 50-cent format in view of the old 32 page 60 cent format (see Comic Reporter). Harvey Comics is going all reprint putting most of the Gold Key line-up. Archie and Charlton output both 8 to 7 titles in September and Charlton is perpetually on the brink of doom.

The Marvel seems to be in reasonable stable monetary mainly primarily to the previous decade's wealth of story structure and valuable photo ideas and characters created by Lee and Kirby. Even so some are down and many have leaps almost non-existent.

Though many of these problems are unique to creators primarily in terms of dignity and wages the general situation of copyright misappropriation is far reaching and the dissension touches nearly every writer and artist in America. Too many people fail to understand that the concept of "work for hire" is The Science Fiction Writers of America recently recovered $220 000 in back payment royalties from just one publisher Ace Books. At the same time they went to battle against Pocket Books Inc over "work-for-hire" work for hire contracts which ensured legality do away with the very existence of royalties.

Along with the embryonic Comic Guild and the Science Fiction Writers the Mystery Writers of America The American Society of Authors and Journalists and seven guilds representing 4000 illustrators cartoonists and graphic artists are all publishing lobbying and planning press conferences to have the work or hire phrase particularly emphasized and deleted from the law now in force or at least clarified and defined.

It's time we stood together and dealt on an equal footing with the companies and bring them into the 20th century

The work for hire clause was written in to protect certain specialized creations from being bought rigged by the artist or writer after the fine printing explains Neal Adams. That is a reasonable function though and really doesn't belong in copyright law. What has developed is a master slave relationship with an unfair advantage given to the employer simply because he controls the money.

There are too many people involved in too many different hands to be ignored even though Marvel and DC try. For example we had heard that some sort of shake-up was in the wind at DC and asked for a little advance warning if major out breaks were being planned, simply so that the guild could bring out representatives. They would have warned us that they didn't. We managed to find work for everyone and get an inquiry.

The Guild which has not even been formally incorporated yet has proved that it can take care of its own and the companies are just have to learn to live with it.

The practical gains of the Comic Book Creators Guild have been drawn together in the last several months and even formally just what is a letter bearing support from the top professionals in the comic field support and $1.00 each for initial mailing.

The following is an extract of that letter and corroborates many of the Guild proposals.

Simply put the businessmen have chosen for the long or possible individuals prices against a powerful corporate structure. Structure that have the initial energy and legal power to put us in our place as individuals.

Recent events in both companies respectively the new "deal for free" comments have only confirmed the need for us to do what we've been and said we've been doing for these decades and that is to speak with one voice as the musicians do as the writers do as the screenwriters do as the directors and as the graphic artists do.

A poster on an assembly line in 1982 who made $38 to $50 per week now makes $260 to $300 per week.

An artist who once made peanuts in 1952 for say DC made $30 to 200 per page pencil and ink. Now that same artist may make $75 per page.

Writers have unemployment representation Freelancers have none. As a matter of fact freelancers are considered self-employed according to the rules of employer's compensation.

Most employees at both Cadence and DC have retirement benefits. Freelancers have none.

Medical insurance is provided by most corporations to their

fewest scholarship employers. Medical insurance is provided to freelancers only on certain conditions one of which includes, at Marvel having to earn a minimum of $75,000 per year which means an artist would have to at $25 per page ink 600 pages in a year a letterer at $7 per page would have to letter 2,143 pages in a year.

Describe these conditions to any other professional and the response is one of horror in every respect, we're years behind them and losing ground.

It's time we stand together and deal on an equal footing with the companies and bring them into the Twentieth Century.

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF A GUILD?

1 To work for and achieve a Guild contract that sets minimum pay and benefits for all working guild members. (A member we are talking MINIMUMS. This is not a union. Under a Guild contract NO UPPER LIMITS to pay or benefits an individual may achieve on his own rack are set. this would be totally unprofessional and to coin a phrase, un-Guild-like!

2 To provide legal advice to individuals who cannot afford it on their own. Membership dollars pay for this help and it is available to all.

3 To provide job assistance to all Guild members through a job pool.

4 To provide a 5-person Grievance and Arbitration Council to which any Guild member can bring any problem for settlement. (This Council would work hand-in-hand with the job pool.)

5 A Publicity Committee which will immediately circulate information having to do with the Guild.

6 As a matter of professional pride, the Guild would work toward a code of ethical standards that as a profession we would seek to uphold.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE GUILD AND IT TO YOU?

Once the Guild acquires a membership that of at least 35 names, and our application papers come back from New York State, nominations and elections will take place through the mail according to standard Guild bylaws. The new Board will immediately draft a Guild contract(s) to be submitted to the membership. If the proposed contract is acceptable, it will be presented to the companies by a Board appointed negotiating team. When a counter-offer is made that is deemed sincere by the negotiating team, it will be presented to the membership for a vote. Each Guild member is expected to vote in these situations.

2 Once a Guild contract is signed by mutual agreement, those minimum rates and benefits will apply only to Guild members. (To be realistic, we suppose the few hold-outs will probably then join up.)

3 In a critical situation arised in the negotiations, a general meeting of ALL MEMBERS will be called. And only by this method will any responses be considered. (Remember more than to the companies comics is our home and as Guild members we would never endanger it.)

"The Guild, which has not even been incorporated yet, has proved that it can take care of its own."

By the beginning of July the 35 founding members needed had been found—half from the younger ranks and the other half from the major producers of comics, including a few that will surprise both Marvel and DC according to Adams. "We are busy now preparing to send out forms soliciting regular memberships, also at $100 each, and hope to nominate the full voting board soon. There is also a special newsletter going out to keep everyone up to date.

Actually things are going rather well—I really only expected about 5 or 20 founding memberships by July but more keep coming in every day. We hope to be established and functioning soon so that can begin to devote more attention to my own career and Studio."

As an example of the standards and practices the Comic Book Creators Guild would like to work under we are reproducing the Illustrators Guild Code of Ethics an excellent delineation of both creators and employer's rights. This is the way most of the legitimate publishing world does business. Items 2 3 5 6 7 9 11 12 13, 15, 17 and 18 do not exist for artist for comic artists or writers. Most of the other articles are practiced primarily because they are to the company's advantage.

1 Orders to illustrators or their agents shall be transacted by way of a written agreement or standard contract which shall state the fee, special compensation when required, due date, name credit, reproduction rights, and a description of the work and the use or uses for which it is intended.

2 The initial fee entitles the employer to first reproduction rights only. Further reproduction or other rights, shall require additional compensation to be agreed upon.

3 All changes not due to the fault of the artist or representative shall require a supplementary confirmation in written form and artist shall receive additional compensation therefor.

4 There shall be no additional compensation for revisions made necessary by errors on the part of the artist or his representative.

5 Alterations to artwork shall not be made without consulting the initial artist and the artist shall be allowed the first option to make all alterations when possible.

6 Work in progress cancelled by employer shall be delivered, when required, to the employer and compensated according to the time and effort together with all expenses incurred. Work temporarily stopped by employer shall be considered cancelled after 60 days.

7 Payment is due to the artist and/or his representative no later than 30 days from the date of completion of work. Where extended assignments are involved partial or advanced payment shall be required.

8 Non-performance with agreed upon specifications or failure by the artist to deliver the contracted work when due, without prior consent by employer shall be considered a breach of contract and shall release employer from obligation.

9 No artist shall render free services on speculation.

"The comic industry is a [redacted] dollar-a-year retail business with another $3 million generated by in-book ads

10 There shall be no rebates, discounts gifts or payments to employers (including agents or employees of employer by artists or their representatives.

11 If comprehensives or any preliminary work is published full fee shall be paid therefor.

12 No artist shall be employed solely to do preliminary drawings or comprehensives with the intention that another artist will be assigned to do the finished work, without the consent of the initial artist at the time of employment.

13 There shall be no plagiarism of any creative artwork.

14 Name credit shall be given the artist for all editorial work. Name credit on advertising work shall be by agreement between the artist and employer.

15 Any agreement between an artist and representative shall be in writing and may take any form agreed to provided that it does not violate the Code of Fair Practice.

16 Samples of an artist's work furnished to an agent or submitted to a prospective employer shall remain the property of the artist and shall not be duplicated without his consent.

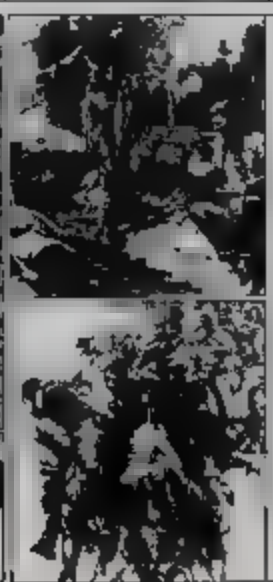
17 No samples of an artist shall be shown by a representative anonymously or without express agreement and authorization by the artist.

18 The Joint Ethics Committee shall have the function of discussing, investigating and making recommendations as to the solutions of problems arising out of the construction, interpretation and administration of this Code and as to the abuses or grievances which arise affecting the relationship between Illustrators and employers.

An interesting footnote to the formation of the Comics Guild is that they are not the only organization to tackle big business for creators rights. According to **The Legal Guide for the Visual Artist** The Artists Guild of New York was founded "in 1920 to combat a malpractice of business ethics. The Artists Rights Association "promotes artists rights." Graphic Artists for Self Preservation "seeks acceptance of fair book contracts and purchase orders. The Graphic Artists Guild "seeks to correct abuses to which graphic artist are subjected. The New Alliance for Artists in New York is a coalition of 50 organizations representing 5000 artists, promoting creator's rights.

The Comic Book Creators Guild will exist and we're going to stay guns up Neal. "We want to work as much as they need us to, so the sooner we can get together on this situation, the sooner we can make comics better for everyone."

Ken Grunwald



WHO INFLUENCED ALEX RAYMOND HAL FOSTER AL WILLIAMSON ROY KRENKEL FRANK FRAZETTA?

He was Joseph Clement Coll one of America's greatest pen and ink illustrators—and here for the first time ever is a comprehensive collection of his work. Coll's specialty was fantasy mystery and heroic adventure. His incredible pen-line and far-reaching imagination illuminated stories by Poe, Doyle, Sax Rohmer, Talbot Mundy and Edgar Wallace. He combined superb draftsmanship and the unexpected viewpoint in visuals of epic battles, barbarians, desert raiders, dancing girls, pirates, bowmen-knights and gladiators. **The Magic Pen of Joseph Clement Coll** features over 200 illustrations, 176 pages on heavy stock. $8.95

TWO NEW ELECTRIFYING PACKAGES OF UNIQUE VISUAL IMPACT

THE ILLUSTRATED HARLAN ELLISON

The Illustrated Harlan Ellison is a project [illegible] script that has eight illustrators [illegible] required to provide the visual imagery and imagination to seven classic stories. Ellen Guon, Ralph Reese, Stephen Hill, Simon Marsden, Wheeler, Alfredo Alcala, [illegible] and Dennis Dittrich, Dykstra, Gaughan and Wayne McLaughlin each bring their unique imagery and imagination to plus like Crawdaddy, Deeper Than Darkness and Shattered Like a Glass Goblin. [illegible] Paperback $7.95 and signed, numbered edition $14.95

A QUALITY FULL-COLOR ILLUSTRATED VOLUME WITH A SPECIAL 3-D INSERT

The most unusual and innovative story in The Illustrated Harlan Ellison is the 10-page adaptation of "Repent Harlequin Said the Ticktockman" by Steranko. The approach is unrestricted and stylized to explore the full 3D experience with glasses.

"REPENT HARLEQUIN SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN" BY STERANKO AND HARLAN ELLISON

PORTFOLIO

A LIMITED EDITION PORTFOLIO SIGNED BY THE ARTIST AND THE AUTHOR

To compliment this important Ellison volume, a special Repent Harlequin Portfolio has been produced. Selecting six of the Steranko story plates for black & white reproduction in a larger 12x18" size. In a specially designed wipcase. Limited to 1500 sets. $12.95.

6 NEW SCIENCE FICTION BLOCKBUSTERS

Ted Sturgeon's More Than Human has become a science-fiction classic since it first appeared over 25 years ago. Now this unforgettable tale has been adapted into graphic novel form by two of comics' [illegible] talents writer Doug Moench and fantasy illustrator Alex Nino. More Than Human is the sensitive story of a small child born ahead of its evolutionary time, searching for acceptance brought to life in emotionally charged full-color on high-quality enamel paper providing an elegant showcase of art and writing unsurpassed for $2.95.

MECHANISMS

[illegible] Empire [illegible] available [illegible] for [illegible]

MORE THAN HUMAN

THE HUMAN

ALIEN CREATURES

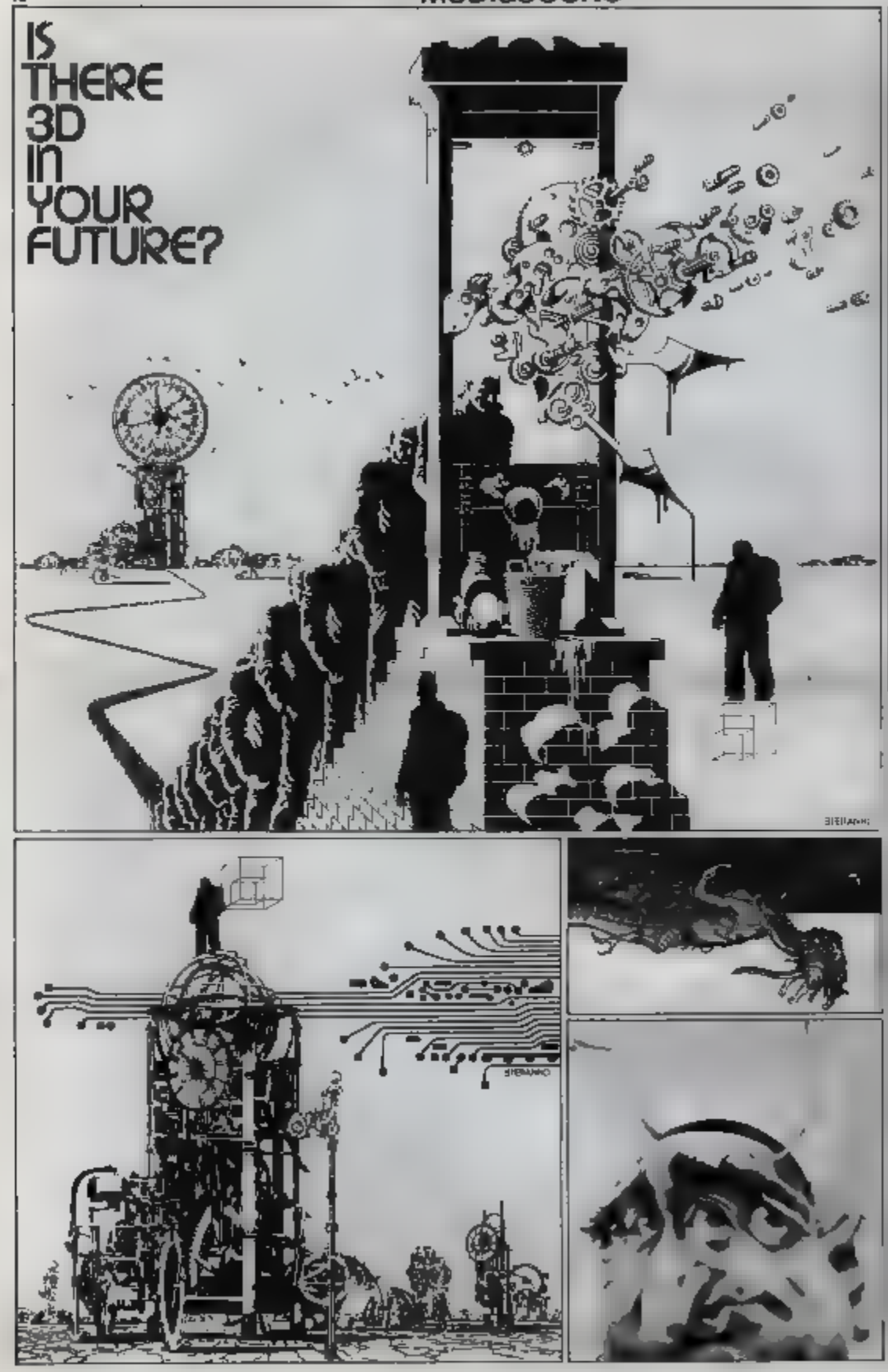
ALIEN [illegible]

In a very additional terrestrial sensations nothing can compare with the [illegible] experience your [illegible] is [illegible] for [illegible] single symbol is Alien Creatures. A definitive illustrated [illegible] Star Wars, Alien Creatures assembles bizarre, unearthly faces from films, comics and TV in a [illegible] of the galaxy and [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] ever wanted to know about [illegible] galaxy's visitors and much more you never even dreamed of, for just $6.95.

[illegible] Empire [illegible]

EMPIRE

Mediascene



Pyramid Books, Voyager Publications Inc. has been an important and increasingly innovative producer of comics-oriented books for several years, from the early Weird Heroes series to the latest graphic novels.

This spring, however, something special happened that lifted the stature of these publications from paperback oddities to best-sellers. That something special was The Illustrated Harlan Ellison.

Success is a modest word for a book that immediately goes through two large trade-edition printings as well as a signed and numbered hardbound edition, was adopted by the Doubleday Science-Fiction Book Club, and is slated for a specially repackaged Ace paperback reprinting in the Fall of '78.

Printed on stock coated paper and using set type rather than handlettering, the book was immediately lifted out of the comic book stereotype mold, an image reinforced by formal grid patterns which created a dignified and disciplined format, as opposed to the usual ZAP! melodramatics. Science-fiction (which had also just escaped from the ghetto of closet minds) provided an ideal literary complement to this type of approach, and the second generation of illustrated fantasy was given birth, full-grown, packed with experimental concepts in graphic storytelling.

Now, a second volume is being produced by Pyramid, focusing on the imaginative stories of Hugo, Nebula and Writers Guild of America award-winner, Harlan Ellison.

The Illustrated Harlan Ellison is planned to top its predecessor by presenting eight of the author's most well-known tales, each illustrated by a different artist using remarkably diverse and distinctive storytelling formats.

The most visually provocative story in the book is an adaptation of an Ellison classic, a 3D interpretation of Repent Harlequin, Said the Ticktockman, complete with glasses.

This story will be illustrated by Steranko, and besides teaming two award-winning creators, will be made particularly memorable by the highly stylized and symbolic visual approach, which is surreal in both a graphic and conceptual sense. The drawings are carefully designed to explore the full range of 3D optics, dramatically developed on eight separate visual planes. In addition to this standard technical process, however, there is also and innovative addition of a special effect plate image which will be utilized for particular emphasis, never before seen in a 3D production.

"The major problem with interpreting any well-known work is that everyone has perfectly cast the characters in their own minds. In this case, the Harlequin and the Ticktockman," Steranko explains, "My solution does not violate any preconceived imagery the reader may have, indeed it zeroes in and locks onto [illegible]

Each illustration is individually designed as a self-contained drawing, embodying major compositional and storytelling elements. The art attempts to synthesize Ellison's ideas into powerful and compelling images, but are progressively structured so that they obtain overall tension and follow the chronology of the story, building towards the conclusive finish. The overall effect is very much like a series of panels in a comic that can be visually 'read' with or without the type, providing a stronger background that augments the poetry of the original story, without the usual words and pictures duplication."

Six of these illustrations by Sherenko have been selected for presentation in a special deluxe Record Mediascene Portfolio. All six pieces will be reproduced in black and white, in a larger size, with a quality silkscreen, for $12.95. This portfolio will be

limited to 1500 copies, signed and numbered by both Sherenko and Ellison.

The signed story in the book is a monolithic thriller about allegiance and expediency in the sewers of New York. Titled Shatterday, Ellison and the Andrews Alexis combine their talents for this full-color tale to make it an atmospheric and stylized masterpiece.

Deeper Than Darkness is another full-color extravaganza, illustrated by National Lampoon artist Wayne McLoughlin. Using a fractured asteroid network, McLoughlin will chronicle the mad saga of Jet Dandercast, pyrotic telepath extraordinaire.

Another unusual approach will be taken by Gardner Lloyd, a frequent illustrator for New Times Magazine, in the story, Jonny Zero, The Looking Air Rascal. This is Ellison's light fantasy of a boy-cum-eyed jew on an alien planet, complete with a Yiddish glossary of pertinent phrases.

Riding the giant Brain Quiz is a 50s tale of a has-been jazz musician given one last chance to make something of his life when he is forced to join Putnam's [illegible] and battle Bonny, Wanda and Bonnie in an atmosphere are interpreted in a series of full-color and monochromatic plates by Ralph Reese.

Phoenix Like a Stone Rabbit is an intricate anti-drug parable, centering on a mentally handicapped veteran trapped in a twilight of the counter-culture tundras. Blindly, both their visions of madness help them and hinder their lives. Illustrated in full-page by William Stout.

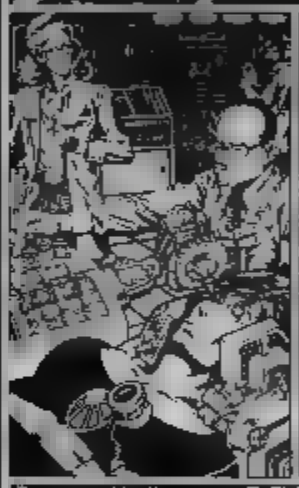
Two Series volume with a multi-media stellar trip of the distant future. The Disasted. The technique used for this segment is an elaborate mind [illegible] on multi-textured papers, reproduced in sepia tones.

In addition, The Illustrated Harlan Ellison will contain an annotated portfolio of full-color mini-poster paintings by Leo and Diane Dillon. The subjects range from an original cover for Shatterday, to the stylistic graphic Nervous Face Perspective.

The Illustrated Harlan Ellison is an ambitious and prestigious four-or-five volume, designed to stretch the limits and examine the potential of graphic story-telling formats. The price tag will be $8.95 for the softcover edition, and $14.95 for a signed and numbered edition with a special color frontplate, both premiering this Fall.

An unsung hero in the realization of The Illustrated Harlan Ellison, as well as the Zelazny, Silverberg and Son of Stardust Mistress volumes, is a man named Norman Goldfind. Norman has been involved in the "straight" publishing world for some time, and was the inside man who helped sell both Pyramid and Berkley on experimental format books by making personal commitments to each project. With the success of The Illustrated Roger Zelazny, his faith in high-quality visual publications has been both vindicated and rewarded, paving the way for future productions of similar scope and format.

In the future, Visual Publications will be joining Putnam's [illegible]



Illustrations ©1974 Leonard Rosenblum and Byron Preiss Visual Publications, Inc.

Stu Shiffman

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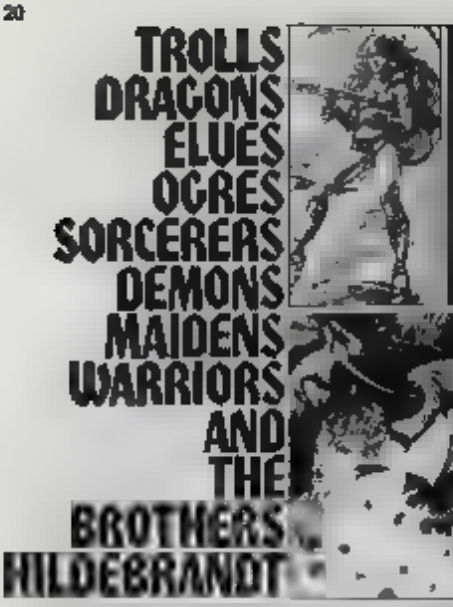
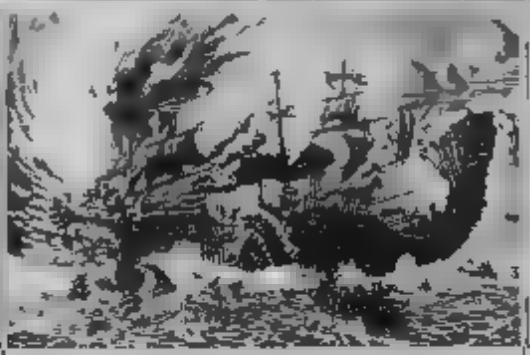
Stu Shiffman



The Brothers Hildebrandt is a uniquely fascinating and exciting 92-page book of art and interviews with the two most popular and respected Tolkein Calendar painters, Tim and Greg Hildebrandt. It is also an impressive portfolio of over 60 paintings, sketches and detailed drawings, with 10 pages of breathtaking full-color. Nearly all of the material presented in **The Brothers Hildebrandt** is in the heroic fantasy tradition, along with model photos and pencil layout sketches to illustrate exactly how these two masterful painters work alone and together. Separate interviews with the two artists give insight to their collaborative efforts. **The Brothers Hildebrandt** is a collector's volume, published to commemorate a special convention exhibition of their work, held in July 1978. Limited to 500 copies. **The Brothers Hildebrandt** *will not be reprinted.* So order your copy today for just $8.00.

Out of the night, alone against the storm, seeking to unravel the secret lives hidden in the shadowy underworld of the city. His world, a violent neon carnival of blackmailers, grifters and gun-men. Brash, relentless, tough as brass knuckles. **Chandler**—the essence of hard-boiled art—a giant 24x36" black & white poster hand-signed by Sienkiewicz. $8.00



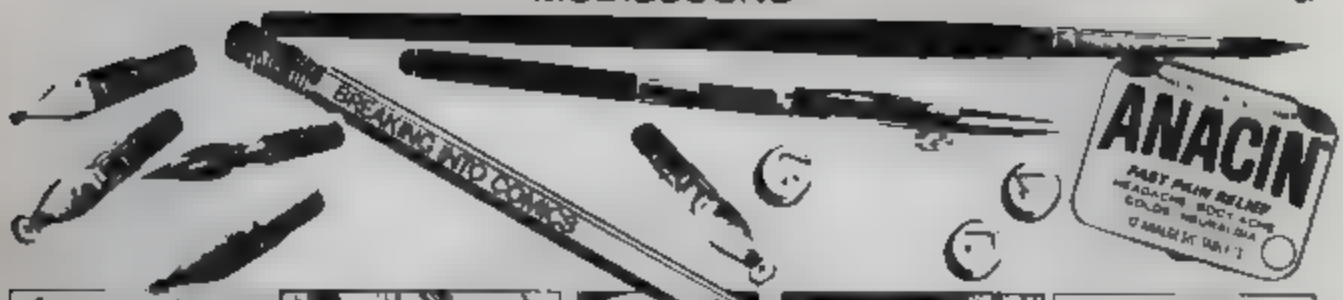
Moby Gloop is ? Anyway, it's big. 8x24"! It's in full-color and it's a brand-new poster by Larry Todd, done as a preliminary showcase for the soon to be released comic book adventures of Moby Gloop. No matter where you look on this outrageous poster there's something bizarre and arresting for the eye—ubiquity with nine eyes staring right back at you, not to mention tentacles and a pendulous green moustache. The sea is literally alive, the sky clutches at the sun, and the savage Moby bears down on the creature-cluttered craft while the mad Ahab watches on—and you will too, fascinated and wondering for hours. Truly an epic scale production of an epic scene. **Moby Gloop** is hand-signed and a choice catch for $3.25.

Motorcycle Mama is a black-leather clad Bode broad on her mean machine, now on a giant full-color poster. **Motorcycle Mama** is a brand-new offering from the Vaughn Bode archives, typically sensual, voluptuously stylized, and available now for just $3.25. **Motorcycle Mama** will put a lustful burn in your engine—or our name ain't Harley!

His name is Elric of Melniborne, an albino warrior-prince. His weapon is a malevolent black rune-sword that drinks the souls of his enemies be they sorcerer or sultan, woman or wizard-king. Bob Gould has captured the imagery of this fantasy in **The White Wolf**, a special edition full-color 12x24" poster on heavy stock. Limited to 1000 signed and numbered copies for $10.00.

He's back—in all his fame and glory—in an all-new collection of strips, stories and sketches. This 128-page volume brings together over a dozen Fritz stories from undergrounds, tabloids and magazines including several which have never been published before. The very first Fritz tale, in pencil on notepaper is also included along with a reflective introduction on the life and demise of Fritz the Cat by Robert Crumb. **The Complete Fritz the Cat** is the definitive book on the underground's favorite character printed on high-quality vellum paper with brand-new front and back cover paintings in full-color by Crumb for $8.00.

AT LAST, ALL OF R. CRUMB'S FRITZ THE CAT ADVENTURES IN A BIG, NEW VOLUME—128 LARGE FORMAT QUALITY PAGES WITH A COLOR COVER!



Every year countless comic fans and collectors decide they would like to enter the professional world of artists and writers who specialize in four color fantasies. A few hundred of these aspiring creators actually make presentations, some traveling hundreds of miles to New York where the editorial offices are located. Only two or three of the most dedicated and talented applicants achieve their goal; the rest are sent by the wayside primarily because they lacked the vital information and skills which are essential to working in the comics field.

In the next few pages we will try to provide answers to the most commonly asked questions about breaking into comics (though breaking out of jail might be easier). The facts are gathered from conversations with dozens of working professionals including Dan Adkins whose experience as Marvel Comics Associate Art Director in the middle 70s put him in direct contact with all the hopeful artists who made the long trek to the promised land of comicdom.

This subject has been virtually unexplored by fandom even though it is a common goal of many readers and collectors. Hopefully this feature will amply fill that gap.

REALITY IN A WORLD OF DREAMS

The comic book business is governed by rules and regulations which make it possible to produce a complete line of titles every month despite inherent problems, injuries, manic deadlines or other disasters of the trade. Because there are thousands of dollars riding on every title in printing, distribution and overhead costs, these rules must be respectfully considered before even attempting to breach comics' ramparts. These rules are unwritten and are often unrecognized by fans and working professionals alike. Nevertheless, they are as rigid and uncompromising as any written law.

1) Comic books exist solely as a medium in which to secure paid advertising.

2) Comic books exist solely as a medium in which to secure paid advertising.

3) Comic success is measured by sales figures, not creativity.

Artists and writers who work within these boundaries receive higher page rates and are allowed to experiment on a modest scale. Hotshot creators out to set the world on fire often find themselves frustrated by these rules because they must prove their commercial value before the companies will gamble on anything revolutionary.

From the company point of view these rules are merely self-protective and not malicious. In general, comic creators are treated in a professional, business like manner as long as their services are acceptable. Those who aspire comics to indulge their private, non-commercial fantasies are viewed as irresponsible and are then unemployed.

Comics like TV and most magazines rarely make any money from their newsstand sales but from the advertising space sold for several thousands of dollars per page. "Good" comics are those which result in higher sales, allowing the company to raise the rate per page of advertising and even make it possible to use even more editorial space for more ads. Ultimately the carefully crafted art and writing are relegated to becoming just so much filler material, allowing the advertiser to concentrate on his specific market through a product originally purchased for amusement and entertainment.

Success is elusive at best and few artists or writers ever become creatively successful until they first become commercially profitable to their employers. Starving is no fun and such basic requirements as food, rent, tuition and materials require the money that commerciality brings. [illegible] creativity and temperament may be alleviated later [illegible]

industry, not a playground.

The examples here are from the portfolio of Gail Heimbach, an aspiring artist who sent several pages showing varying degrees of skill and [illegible] Gail was recently given an assignment by DC Comics, and we are grateful that he has allowed us to use some of his material to illustrate this article. Most comic-book artists have such things when they send their samples [illegible]

[illegible] and drawing [illegible] their material, only the primary storytelling elements will be analyzed, because they are the most basic to drawing comics—the communication of ideas.

The action of this page, a girl running to escape a madman, is clear enough, but several major faults in composition, placement of characters, and use of panels exist. The scene takes too long to read, the people point, and the man's face is never clearly seen. The balloons unnecessarily run [illegible] gutter itself is much too wide.

Panel 1 is confused by the action in the extreme foreground—what it is we [illegible] or can't see.

Panel 2 shows the girl, [illegible] a motion that [illegible] between the two panels, an almost awkward viewing from the page. The top of the head is obviously [illegible], while the upraised [illegible] high angle is confusing [illegible]

awkwardly, obliterating her face. This panel would have worked better as a dramatic [illegible] close-up of the villain's face.

Panel 4 has an attempted use of foreshortening, having pointing the girl towards the reader, and panel 5 is appropriately used to reveal the girl's unnoticed [illegible], but she should [illegible] angle rather than [illegible] the girl running away. The shot [illegible] gives the proper shoulder, [illegible] [illegible] dominant, oppressive [illegible]

does not mean that all successful comic creators "sell out" and that they have learned how to accommodate comics demands while satisfying their own creative desires. It's a tightrope act that few can perform. Those that do, find both personal and financial rewards for their efforts.

BASIC SKILLS REQUIRED

ARTISTS

Draw, draw, draw — and then draw some more. One of the best approaches is to draw for fanzines primarily to have your work reproduced — an invaluable opportunity to compare your work with real comics and evaluate the differences. Draw handsome faces, heroic figures and beautiful women until you are as good as John Buscema or Neal Adams and don't neglect backgrounds, animals, buildings and other interiors and exteriors. While drawing study composition, details and designs from comics, paintings, photographs and films. Until completely executed illustrations can be constructed with the proper directional, focal, perspective and decorative elements. At this point you will have mastered ALL of the skills needed to achieve success.

The next task is one that writers should study as well because it is an elusive and complex creative ability that must be kept in mind at all times: storytelling.

Storytelling is an exact and demanding art which propels the story forward with verve and clarity. Competent storytelling can be learned but true facility comes from an instinctive and thorough knowledge of dramatic communication and functional art.

Visual excitement is of prime importance so action, erotic locales, intriguing situations and colorful characters are essential. Every page should contain elements of varying sizes with no two panels identical in composition or point of view. Similarly, the overuse of close-ups dissipates their impact, while backgrounds in every panel simply clutter the page and slows down the story.

The ideal comics page should contain one establishment shot with detailed backgrounds to set the scene and present the cast or action in full regalia, usually spanning a full third of a page and placed at the beginning of a new sequence; one close-up to register emotional reactions; and pick-shot employing a unique point of view, several medium two-shots (two figures from the waist up) used to deliver dialogue, build hero/villain conflict and progress the story logically. The medium shot is the backbone of narrative storytelling but care must be taken to avoid repetition.

Panel size is also vital to storytelling: large panels denote massive spectacle and importance while smaller panels are more intimate and less important. Medium-sized panels develop the story at a steady, even pace with variations in size speeding up or slowing down the momentum to fit the plot's requirements.

Even the composition of elements within a comic book panel are important storytelling devices: symmetrical pyramid formations (such as those employed by Frazetta) convey power, authority and strength; circular arrangements can be punishing and restrictive. The directional thrust of figures, elements, explosions and shadows should lead the reader unobtrusively from one panel to the next. Conversely, misplaced directionals and awkwardly cropped elements are disorienting, confusing and disruptive of the plot.

Running, leaping, crouching, reaching and flying figures are preferred in comics because their very attitude conveys a heroic image — they are in total control, masters of their panel space. Sitting, lying, talking, kneeling or propped up figures are generally unsympathetic visually because they are obviously off balance and in need of support. And by all means, avoid characters which are deformed, except for particularly vicious villains — readers are made uncomfortable by any departure from comics idealized perfection.

All these storytelling tricks and more have been proven, under fire, throughout the past 50 years by such masters as Milton Caniff, Wally Wood, Carl Barks, Joe Kubert, Jack Kirby, Alex Toth, Charles Biro, John Buscema, Steranko, Neal Adams and Gil Kane. Of course, there are refinements and embellishments to be added to these basic rules, but only after the artist or writer has proven himself capable of mastering and manipulating the basic storytelling elements and concepts.

Logic and function are the two primary elements to be kept in mind at all times at every phase of producing a comics page. Every figure and line should have a reason for existing, either compositionally, structurally or decoratively. Similarly, every word by the writer should propel the story forward with clarity and economy. Extraneous words, lines, panels, even entire sequences should be eliminated if they cannot be specifically justified. Anytime a question is raised over "Why did you do that?" a logical answer must be available.

Do not present samples with experimental page layouts, plot-less angles and unheroically realistic figures and poses — they are not concepts the industry is willing to wager upon so you will only be wasting time. Remember, it's their game so it's up to them to play rules until your reputation, experience and talent afford justify experimentation.

ARTISTS

Storytelling is an important subject of study for writers, an utterly alien one they are called on to produce full scripts with panel by panel breakdowns for the artist, a system currently used by DC Comics.

The one universal truth about comics is that they are pictures with words, not the other way around. The visual element is what separates comics from short stories and good writers recognize the importance of lively settings with text moving the visuals. A good artist can often save a bad script, but poor art can ruin a great story. The entire responsibility for success or failure ultimately rests with the illustrator. Part of the writer's skill lies in writing not just words, but visual images which retain impact when interpreted by the artist.

Just as artists must draw, comic authors must write. They should also be voracious readers and ham-goers so that their experience of plots, characters and dialogue is large enough to vary and match indefinitely. There are no new plots to be discovered or new characters to be revealed, so swiping and adapting are permissible. In fact, swiping from top-notch talents is a successful practice, and often preferable to dredging up ideas out of the story-starved for the marathon slugfests a month's story in existence.

Study comics to learn what visual elements are the most engaging and their peculiar vocabulary of adjective-ridden dialogue and self-conscious stilted traits. Comics will also help the writer in judging how many words will fit into a panel, approximately 20 words maximum per balloon and 30 for captions, and how to avoid easy concentrations of type, breaking up wordy blocks of copy into smaller ones to accept pasteups. It is also vital to learn when dialogue and captions are

CLEA--DO YOU FIND ANYTHING PARTICULARLY
ABOUT THIS
CLOCK?
YEAH, BESIDE THE FACT THAT IT FAILS TO KEEP TIME?
AND, STEPHEN
NOTHING DISTURBING
NO CLEA-
AS FOR THE CONCERN WE HAVE ABOUT THE ACTUAL OPERATION OF THE CLOCK, IT'S JUST THE BIZARRE FEELING WE'RE GETTING FROM IT. IT SEEMS TO EMANATE SOME HOSTILE, UNNATURAL
EMANATIONS.
THE WAY WE'VE ARRANGED IT IN THE ARMS ONE DAY, I JUST SHOVING UP AT OUR DOOR...
WE'VE BEEN JUST LIKE A LION IN A CAGE WITH A SIX
SIT DOWN AND HAVE A CUP OF TEA

needed in relation to the artwork. It's usually the villain speaking when the hero is being beaten in a pulp, but the good guy always has the last word.

Even though current trends promote the never-ending super-epic storyline, it's a good idea to construct tales with a definite three-act structure and an old-fashioned beginning, middle and end. A novice writer will undoubtedly be assigned to a filler or short back-up feature, so learning how to tell a tale with economy will help get your foot in the door. Stories told in a single issue are often the most memorable as well, because they compress all the action and adventure into a single statement.

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

PENCILLERS

One of the major failings of over 90 percent of all hopeful comic artists is that they think they know what a comic book page looks like. They are often in error. This misunderstanding is crucial to success because pencil sketches, single illustrations, crayon scribbles and art school projects do not tell a comic art director what he needs to know about an artist's work.

If at all possible, study original comic art—interior pages, not covers or splash panels. There are countless tricks and techniques visible in the original that are lost when reduced in size and colored for printing. Corrections, changes, notations, and stylistic touches become readily apparent and most of all the time, care and patience invested in every panel can be seen in detail.

Original comic art is drawn on vellum paper 1½x17½ in size, with the actual image area 10x15" centered on the page. Penciling should be done with lead that is not so soft as to smudge in handling, or so hard that it engraves each line into the paper fibre. Use artgum or kneaded rubber erasers to avoid damaging the "tooth" or textured finish of the paper.

Study successful artists' work and don't be afraid to swipe. The companies would prefer quality swipes than poorly drawn original art. Though it sounds like a joke, there is a grain of truth in Wally Wood's admonition to his assistants: "Don't draw what you can swipe, don't swipe what you can trace, don't trace what you can photograph. But above all, don't draw because you probably can't." Also in line with this idea is the necessity of building a reference file of comic panels, photos, paintings and illustrations carefully broken down into categories such as heads, hands, cars, guns, animals, trees, etc. Absolutely no one knows how to draw camels or battleships from memory.

Pencillers should work as tightly as possible, so that an inker can literally follow the lines. Speed is also an essential factor, simply because comics do not pay enough to support an artist whose output is one page every few days. Tight deadlines such as completing a complete 17-page story in two weeks, demand rapid production.

INKERS

Finding professional pencil drawings in fanzines, or acquiring xerox copies of full-size pencilled pages from an artist, comic book company or collector are the first step in practicing to become a professional inker. Then comes hours of practicing on tracing paper, testing various tools and techniques. Most inkers use Guillott or Hunt pens and Winsor Newton sable brushes as series 7 number 1 through 4. The pen is precise, but the brush is more flexible and creates a uniquely crisp and resilient ink line. Any dense black india ink will do, but some will clog or deteriorate brushes rather rapidly. Keep all your tools clean.

For large masses of machinery and angular shapes, a Rapidiograph pen with a large ink reservoir should be used. All straight lines must be inked with a ruling pen and straight-edged ruler, correcting hurriedly pencilled forms. Circles demand the use of a compass or plastic template, and curved surfaces require the smoothness that only a French curve can supply.

LETTERERS

Lettering is an art in itself and comics require yards of words for every book produced. Letterers will find Speedball pens B-5, B-6 and FB-6 the most commonly used in the business, with occasional modifications made by the more experienced professionals. To master this skill a great deal of practice is required, along with a thorough knowledge of the distinctive differences in letter forms.

In addition letterers must be aware of balloon shapes (some professionals use elliptical templates), and the necessity of not crowding the airspace within the balloon. They must also learn how to artfully break-up large bodies of copy because readers simply will not plow through a solid wall of dialogue or narrative.

Comic lettering is generally one-eighth inch in height with one-sixteenth inch between each line—there are inexpensive lettering guides available which make ruling these measurements fast and easy. A thorough knowledge of lettering is helpful in executing the various sound effects comics utilize as well as in designing distinctive logo types. And for convenience sake (the inkers mainly), letterers are required to rule the panel borders in comics.

WHAT TO SUBMIT

Pinups and portraits are pretty but they have almost no place in a comic portfolio. Similarly, art studies, sketches, landscapes, nudes and still-life illustrations should be left at home. What the art director wants to see is how well a prospective artist draws comics, so keep that thought uppermost in mind.

Prepare a special presentation of a five or six-page story—by no means prepare more than ten pages—completely pencilled, with balloons and captions in place. If part of the skills being presented include inking, be sure to ink only one or two pages, so that the art director can judge both talents separately—the same goes for lettering, because few novices are proficient in all the talents required by comics.

Bring only your newest and best art; don't submit "Something I did in 1975." Don't bother investing in fancy vinyl portfolios—everyone you will meet can afford a dozen just like it. Instead bring a true cross-section of your best art in a single story. The interviewer will be able to evaluate your work in a page or so and his time is more valuable than yours. The more pages you take in, the less time you will probably get.

Current comics are very action oriented, so keep that in mind when preparing your story—the key is speed, excitement and storytelling. A simple pattern to follow and one that will immediately save time for both the artist and an director is a standard acrobatic hero vs villain fight with a sexy girl in the background. Keep the figures idealized and graceful and remember that comics will entertain so include plenty of shiny hardware an exotic background and some city buildings for good measure.

Again the value of storytelling cannot be overstated. The sample story submitted should be understandable without lettering or any kind. Slightly substandard anatomy is occasionally overlooked if the artist's sense of dominance and clarity

CLEA, IN HER PURE LAWFUL BUT WITH A VENGEANCE!
STEPHEN IS TRULY TRAPPED! WHAT HAS TRANSMUTED HERE??
THE MIRROR CLEA, YOU MUST TRY!
HE CAN BE A MONARCH STEPHEN IF YOU COULDN'T HOW COULD I POSS
MY POWERS MAY BE LIMITED BUT NOT BY THE GODS!
FOOL! DID YOU THINK YOUR SECOND-RATE POWERS COULD BE A MATCH FOR ME—
—THE ULTIMATE??
MY POWERS COME FROM THE EVIL MIRROR!
HA HA HA! SO STRANGE YOU AT LAST BREAK!
SMILE NOW, FOR SOON YOU SHALL BE UNTRANSFORMED!
BUT NO MATTER— FOR SHALL STILL HAVE THE MIRROR!
STEPHEN! THAT MIRROR BEHIND YOU!!

This page is essentially limited to illustrate the capture of Doctor Strange by a force emanating from the mirror. Clea's courage and failure to perform a standard manuever Strange breaking free, possession of the whole. Visually, it fails to get this across, and has many elements are the stated page for adequate variety.

In panel 1, Clea is unhappy. Why, and in fact, abstracts the menace emanating from the [illegible]. A higher-angle shot [illegible] position and relationship of all the characters more clearly.

Panel 2 is artificially enlarged, violating the page structure and forcing the story flow by being "out of place," and unnecessary. The balloons, aside from obscuring Strange's countenance, convey nothing that could not have been presented in the previous panel. A close-up of Clea would have been better.

Panel 3 does not make it clear that the menace has appeared in the mirror. Doctor Strange is [illegible] comes the mouth of the threatening mirror menace and the decorative swish [illegible] in the foreground is distracting—all confusing visual storytelling.

Panel 4 is Strange's great escape scene, complete with a powerful symbiotic composition, but he is visually confined by the cramped lines and Clea. There is no dramatic interaction, so that the three elements are more of a collage than a structured panel. The last panel should have been [illegible]

...sse for a prodigious feat ...magic, and a variety of ...nations and nonsenses. The ...agic, however, goes equally ...unnoticed, while panels 1 and 2, and 3 and 4 are almost identical ...their points of view.

In this case, the structure of the page should have been loosely altered to harmonize ...ith the way third should be ...ed in half to present, on the ...the panel this chest height, without touching it—his hands are wide open and slightly above the leg. The carriage and tension are in the background, and the passengers are showing unsuspectedly—except for Strange, who is standing up.

The bottom third of the page is divided into three beats. The first panel is dominated by a profile of the male passenger, casting a side-long glance at ...ge, and refusing help in clearing the obstacle, shot head-on into the carriage to establish everyone's relative positions. The next panel should be Strange's open-eye reaction of surprise, eyes wide and jaw gaping.

The entire middle third of the page should be overpowered by the outstretched arms and back of the driver, who has the leg about two-thirds of the way up ...the original. Panel 2 is a medium two-shot of the girl asking Strange to sit down, and turning up the heat some with the dialogue "...country you're soon gonna possess forever..." Then next, a head spins close-up of the girl actively threatening "...ruin all best them you know."

The page builds to a spectacular visual effect in its center ...erse, seated on an ...reader to turn the page or ... the next beat.

The page, as done, gained ... suffers from a lack of dramatic ...background and visuals—it is ...more expressive close-ups, or ... the directional cues in panels ... and 4 lead the reader's eye off the page. The lettering has ... helped either because it more accentuates the basic figure ...ry graphics and perspective ...

are strong enough.

Common errors should be avoided, such as do not pencil with shaded tones or an infinite strata of tiny lines. This merely consumes an inker's time and will not reproduce well in any case. Leave adequate room for word balloons so that hours of labor won't be covered by a letterer searching for room to squeeze in such priceless prose as "What the?" and "HUNH?"

Be sure to use established and familiar characters in your samples for the following reasons: it will be easier for the editor to evaluate your work within his frame of reference ... you will eventually have to use the company characters so pick a favorite and save some time and effort. every comics creator has dozens of ideas to sell. theirs will always be accepted before yours. comics only pay for lines and words. not ideas. new characters are a waste of time to the novice artist. Both Marvel and DC are thoroughly formularized in their output these days, and fully new conceptual ideas are really not wanted. such concepts usually prove to be non-comic anyway.

GETTING READY

The important thing to remember about this subject is summed up in three words—Don't go. yet.

In the two years that Dan Adkins was on the Marvel staff approximately 200 would-be artists submitted work and only three were accepted. Too many applicants were simply too inexperienced (17-19 years old) and couldn't draw well enough. They were too close to their work to be able to make a realistic evaluation of its quality.

The solution: go to a pro first and be prepared for a letdown. There are enough comic conventions around the country to make personal contact with professionals. The time and money invested will be well spent. trying to enter the business too soon could result in an editor remembering the artist's initial failure, and not even bothering to look at his subsequent efforts.

Professional comic artists have all gone through the same agonizing search for approval, and many will take the trouble to comment on an eager newcomer's efforts. They will offer pointers and politely indicate areas needing improvement. Listen carefully to this advice because these are the words of people who have "made it" and their experience cannot be bought.

Some artists and inkers employ assistants, and it may be worthwhile to ask if such a position is available. This step will require the young artist to sublimate his own style in favor of doing backgrounds and erasing pages but there is priceless knowledge to be gained in seeing actual pages being produced from rough layouts to finished art.

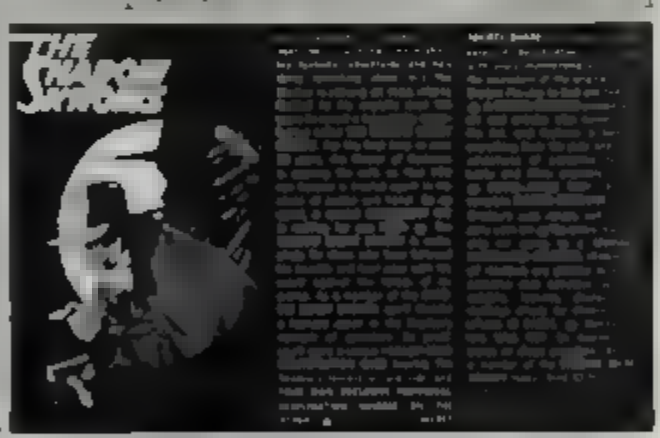
When the final moment comes, and you feel absolutely sure that the time has arrived to make the move to enter the comic field, check with the professional one more time. He will undoubtedly have a few more criticisms to make, and more importantly can advise you on the current state of the industry whether or not anyone is hiring and who to see.

WHEN TO GO

Timing is an important factor in breaking into comics. Fall and winter are generally slow seasons, so hiring is down. Spring and early summer are hectic with many new projects but the very quantity of work makes it likely that a tryout job would be tossed in your direction.

A personal visit is preferable to submitting work by mail—it's easy to reject a package of art. It will also allow more questions to be answered and you will receive first-hand instructions on how to improve your work. It is important to remain flexible at this point and adaptable to company policy because the editor or art director may be willing to "take a chance" with an artist who will do exactly what is asked of him.

Never arrange to go to the offices on a Friday because everyone will be in a hurry to get away for the weekend. Similarly, Monday is a bad day because



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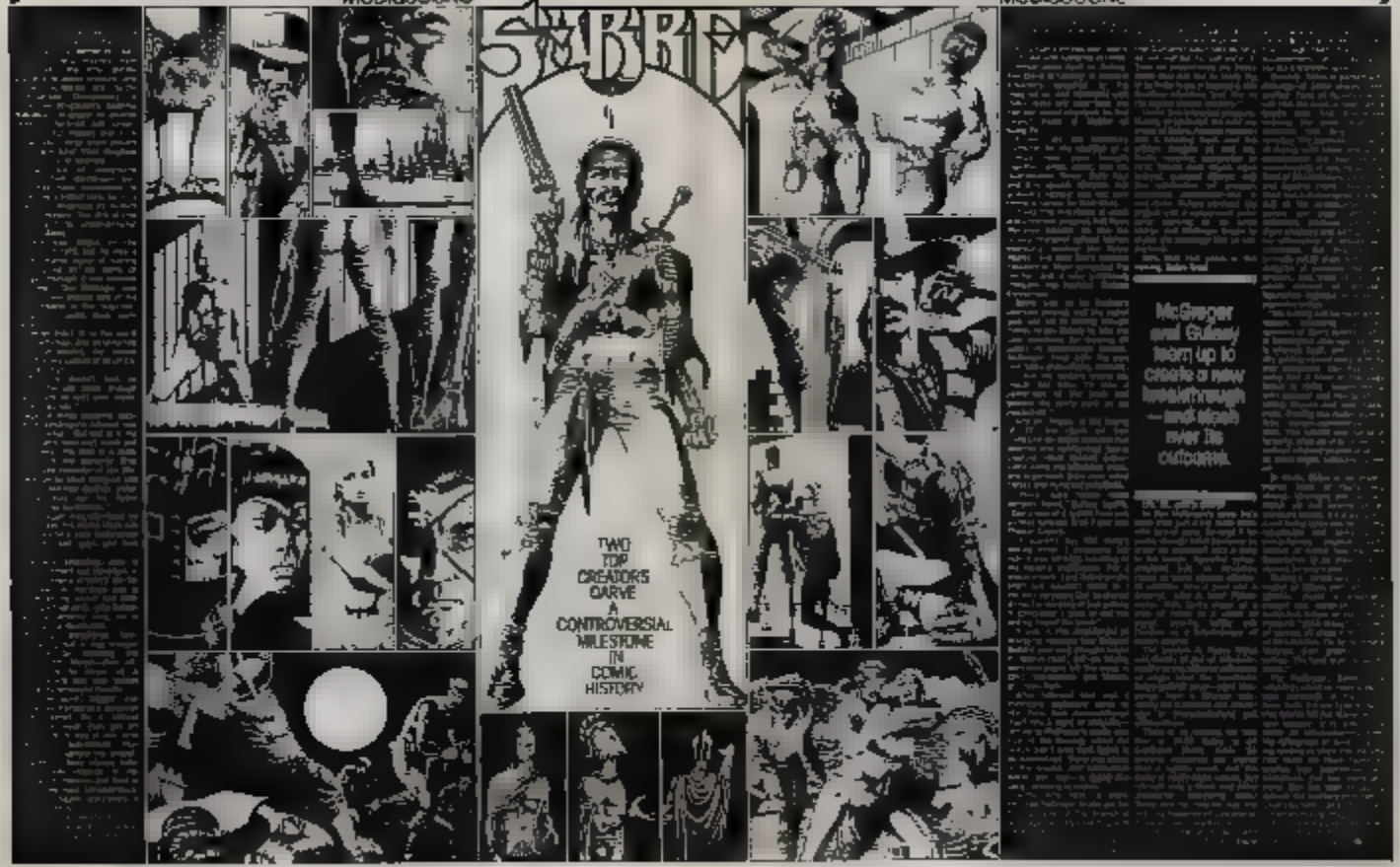

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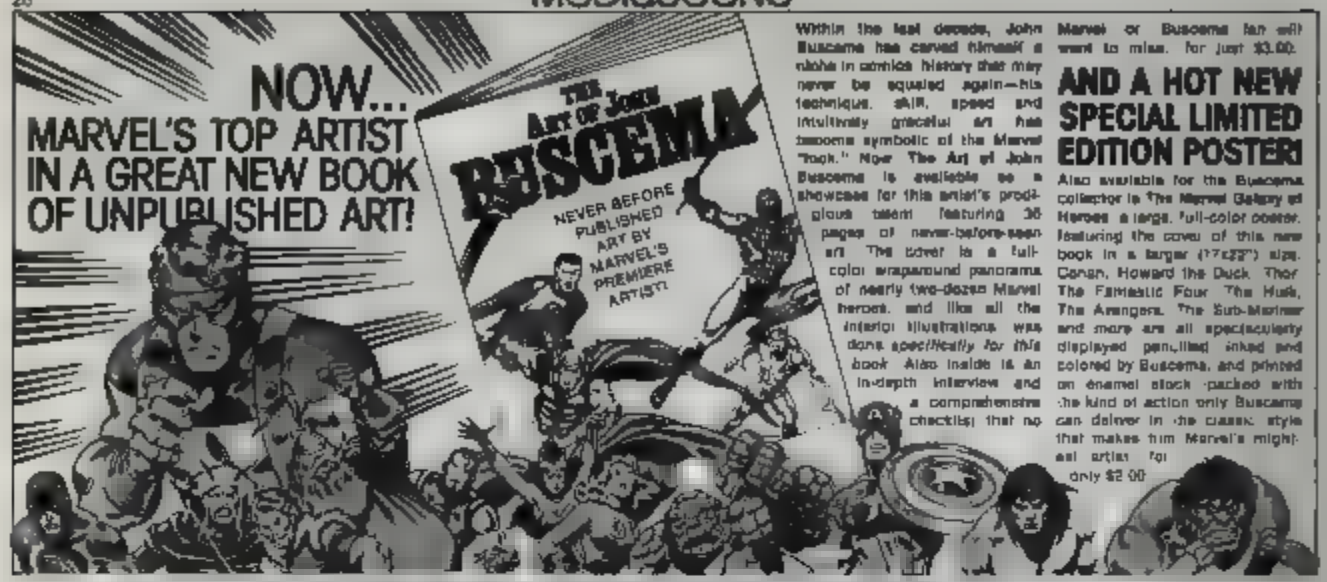
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Hot Stuff—that's what you'll find between the pages of this professional quality fantasy comics magazine. Not just another fanzine, Hot Stuff is an unusual underground comic, printed on high-quality offset paper with full-color covers by top professionals. Hot Stuff 4 features comics and stories by Toth, Morrow and Bob Wilkins, with a color cover by Ken Barr. Issue 5 is a novel-length issue featuring Corben and Tim Kirk, with a full-bleed cover by Corben. Hot Stuff 6 is literally packed with art by Mike Kaluta, Berni Wrightson, Jack Jackson, Tim Boxell and more. Issue 7 is a showcase for all-new art and stories by Mike Kaluta, Ernie Colon, Barry Windsor-Smith and others. Hot Stuff 8 presents the celebrated pulp-era art of Virgil Finlay, Ken Barr, Ernie Colon and Rich Larson. Every issue is a dynamic display of the most interesting comic experiments—making Hot Stuff the magazine where the fans and the pros get together for really unexpected results. Just $5.00 per issue.

ELRIC

First in an ultra-rare collector's item of a limited time only. This all-color Elric Print was done several years ago in conjunction with a special hardbound book by Bob Gould. 300 were printed but less than half were released. This print is circular, six inches in diameter, and comes in a custom-made plastic-windowed mailer, signed by the artist and Dister sealed in plastic. These are the last copies of this unusual collectors item while they last. available now for just $10.00

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EXPLODED!

THE DC EXPLOSION

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

June, 1978, is a month that will go down in comics history marking a stunning setback for the industry's oldest and most firmly entrenched publisher, DC Comics.

The DC Explosion has come to a fizzling halt—its fuse snuffed out by Warner corporate accountants and executives. The entire 50-cent changeover has been aborted and a third of the titles in production have been chucked onto the superhero scrapheap. Without so much as a single sales figure or reliable reaction to the then month-old format, DC has imploded upon itself, resulting in lay-offs, firings, character curtailments and embarrassment among its staffers.

Simply put, seventeen books were cancelled and six newly announced series also scuttled. Some of the already completed material is being shuffled to other titles, and editorial assignments have been realigned into more of a one-character-per-editor system.

The reaction of many DC artists and writers at the July Comic Con was to treat the matter as lightly as possible, striking an ain't comics silly?" pose on panels. The jokes got laughs, but then those telling them were still employed at DC.

The other side of the coin was ignored, a purge had taken place at DC, and somebody had to have been hurt. According to Marvel editor Jim Shooter: "The day after the cutback, had DC people lined up in the hall waiting for work from Marvel." Neal Adams confirms that "there must have been around 30 people turned out, and we had to find work for them at Marvel Continuity wherever."

GREGASCENE talked to DC's public-relations man Mike Gold in his office after the purge, not only to find out what had happened, but why and how. The light-hearted opening is typical of the way most DC personnel were handling the situation at the time, managing to take the edge off a situation that is admittedly bad but not a total disaster. Mike walked the tightrope of his publicity job and explaining some embarrassing truths for over an hour and never evaded the problems at hand, particularly when answering questions about the cause of the cutback rather than its effects.

MG: We'll start easy. What happened?

MG: Well, we came to work one day last month, and there was this great big parking lot where the building used to be, and it was making ten times the money the comics used to. See, we do try to be philosophical, even when the ship is sinking. And "the DC implosion" was my joke first.

Quite honestly, we were simply caught up in a situation over which we had no control and like it or not, we've had to adjust to an entirely new set of circumstances. I won't pretend we wanted things this way but in some areas, it has forced us to reorganize into more efficient editorial units. And yes, it has been very embarrassing.

MG: This surely wasn't an arbitrary decision on anybody's part so what brought this situation on—the story behind the story?

MG: It all starts with our yearly budget review meeting, which is held six months after our annual budget meeting. One gives you the money and the other checks to see how you're spending it in six months anything can happen and this time it did. What they saw in May was the result of this winter's blizzard and things just sort of rolled along from there out of DC's control. To be honest however, what happened was not solely in response to these figures but more due to the patterns which have been developing over the past several years.

Prices went up last year, but we have found that our price increases do not necessarily have any influence on our overall sales, and that Marvel generally raises their books soon after ours anyway—this was true of the 25 to 30 and 30 to 35-cent increases. One thing we have all been noticing, however, is a general drop-off of sales when everybody levels out at the same price, a problem which unfortunately coincides with another annual event, the winter slump. The timing of these two situations makes it difficult to tell which is most responsible for poor sales, but last year's version of the trend was staggering.

September through December are not peak sales months to begin with, and there developed a genuine resistance to the 35-cent package when Marvel finally took the step up. Then the winter set in, trucks didn't roll, books were on and off the stands in a week—it was simply a disaster and our sales figures were shameful.

When Warners saw these numbers, they decided to take a look at the overall figures for the last few years. They finally came to notice the trend we've always been aware of over a ten-year period. DC has been selling fewer individual books, and compensating by putting out more titles and their sales vary with the seasons. Both problems could be attributed to the fact that we have a large overhead—rent, contract salaries, production costs—and the fact that the distributor asks us how many copies of a book we must print before he will even consider handling it. The distributor is paid a flat fee, based on the print run, whether he does his job or not, and literally thousands of comics never leave the warehouse. It's a really archaic system that relys on surviving the strands by sheer force of numbers, despite the dwindling amount of space available. What makes this situation worse is the fact that our distributor, Independent News, is part of the Warner Communications conglomerate as we are. Obviously an untenable arrangement.

MG: We have heard that the immediate reaction among the Warner executives was to simply discard the entire comics line and merchandise the top characters while licensing the comic rights to Marvel (ergo, Sol and Warner president Jay Emmett were supposed to have avoided this solution by promising the kinds of major cutbacks and reorganizations that took place. Is there any truth in that story?

MG: I can't say nobody upstairs ever thought about that, but I have not heard anything even remotely along those lines before now.

What Warners did decide on was to follow a plan that we had proposed in late May designed to produce fewer titles, but get them all into supermarkets and new outlets. Our dollar books seemed to be able to break into these areas, but nobody would ever accept our other 32 titles in a lump. It will just be too much material for them to handle.

We cut ourselves back to 20 top money-making monthly books and six bi-monthly dollar titles so that our schedules could be streamlined and our distribution package more easily handled. All of our books make money, so it was just a matter of weeding out the marginal titles, and sticking with the high profit books.

MG: Don't you think that that particular approach is a little worn out as an excuse? Infantino sent nearly a hundred titles to their graves, all the while claiming that they were money-makers being sacrificed to make room for bigger bonanzas. Marvel at least admits, occasionally that sales are behind their cancellations, and we all know that comics first compare to and must be, money. Not art. Such an approach doesn't work for a book like Shade either because it didn't have enough issues published to build an audience before it got smashed in the winter crises—the book was strange to begin with, but it never really had a chance in the marketplace.

MG: I know what you mean, and can't make you believe it, but we've tried to repair our credibility from what it was three years ago, which is why I'm comics' first public relations representative. I believe we're much more honest about the industry's problems, and not afraid to admit that Warner's decision to abandon the 50-cent format was a serious blow to many people.

There was no solid reason to go back to 32-pages for 40-cents, and we were very disappointed because we believed in the 50-cent package. If it had failed, OK. But it never even got a fighting chance, and whatever figures do come in will be false, because they only reflect the sales of the best three months of the year.

Warners felt that if we were going to stop being an overproducer and cut back to present a regular quality package, we shouldn't put the audience with reduced formats changes. The argument is in some ways logical but it was really difficult to change gears that fast twice in a row.

MG: How specifically did all this affect the DC staff?

MG: We were forced to let go of several artists, writers, inkers and production personnel, as well as editors Larry Hama and Al Milgrom. Murray Boltinoff was cut back to one book. It was our designers who took the worst of the punishment, even though we don't think any of them really deserved to be fired. On the other hand, we simply couldn't support them in our new streamlined operation.

Let's face it, we're in a medium that sells less than 150,000 copies of some titles that used to be good for 1,000,000 copy sales every month. Perhaps distribution is part of the answer and I'm very happy to be exploring a new approach to that problem.

MG: The reduction of DC titles raises an important question about market place exposure. Marvel Comics will now outnumber DC by about three to one. Marvels are cheaper, flashier, and as popular as DCs, if not more so. Won't DC simply be buried by overflow of Spider-Man and Conan?

MG: Our belief is that that won't happen. We will stand a better chance of getting all our books out of the warehouse, and the Independent News sales force is very strong. The books we are keeping are all strong sellers in addition. Marvel will probably be up to 40-cents soon enough, because paper costs have jumped again, as of July 1! All Marvel will probably do is sell more comics overall, but not more copies of any single title, which keeps their overhead

printing costs higher than ours.

MS: Who made the actual decisions about who to keep and who to fire?

MG: Jenette and Sol and I'm sure Joe Orlando was also involved as well. We obviously had to retain our best people, so selections were based on quality and each individual's past performance. We are still sorting out the particulars of this matter but there are several artists who need not worry, including all our contract employees.

The president of Warner, Jay Emmett, and a number of board members and executives decided what had to be done, but they left it to us to make the personnel and editorial decisions.

MS: Was content ever discussed as a factor in DC's sales slump?

MG: Not really because both good-selling and bad-selling books can come from the same artist or writer. We have simple books and complicated ones, and both kinds have an audience.

MS: But don't you see content and approach as major influences on the fact that DC is perpetually going through fur mail trying to achieve success, while Marvel just glides along, putting out books—their failures aren't nearly as spectacular—and Marvel generally succeeds more consistently and casually.

MG: Well we are trying to pull together our line and evolve a more contemporary image, but you can't do that overnight. The influx of Marvel personnel has certainly influenced our look but I don't feel we are actually "copying" the Marvel style and look. The most "Marvelized" DC books have been cancelled, and we're trying to synthesize the Curt Swan technique into more contemporary settings. We are striving for tighter continuity and plot development—admittedly old Marvel concepts—but distinctively blended with Julie Schwartz or Denny O'Neil's or Jim Aparo's own unique approaches.

We are also going back to the old technique of guest-starring characters before dropping them into titles of their own where they invariably die.

MS: You're describing most of Marvel's 60s techniques now but they are all so alien to the DC image. Julie Schwartz produced his own style of lightly written "thinking" comics, and Bob Kanigher had a franchise on interesting and punchy war stories, while Marvel has always been an emotionally violent company with heroes relying more on their hearts than their brains. How do you expect to create something new and different out of these two old and completely divergent concepts?

MG: We must keep DC's "style" of course, but we are getting fresh new viewpoints from writers like Denny and Len Wein. We also have great faith in artists like Buckler, Aparo, Swan and Novick who continue to grow and develop new perspectives on our characters.

MS: All of this format changing price ad. increase and general chaos just appear to be extensions of the confusion that went on while Infantino was running things. Wasn't Jenette brought in specifically to change all that?

MG: Well Jenette has changed the way people think of DC, and the editorial outlook is more stable than it used to be. She is also responsible for the dollar comics line-up, which was not affected by the pullback because it has proven to be very successful. This 50-cent format got torpedoed before it had a chance to float. Consequently Jenette is receiving a lot of criticism she doesn't really deserve.

Over a ten-year period, DC has been selling fewer books and compensating by putting out more titles. . . an archaic system.

Unfortunately she is the public figurehead of DC, and being held up to attack at a time like this is one of the risk factors in being on top.

MS: Exactly how does she feel about that?

MG: She doesn't really take this situation personally because the move is not a reflection on her merely an attempt to cope with seasonal, financial and distribution problems. Obviously, she feels bad about the firings because she gave Milgrom and Hama their break as editors. And the abandonment of the 50-cent line was disappointing because she really believed in it.

My own personal observation stepping out of my DC public relations role for a moment, is that Jenette is an excellent manager in the last two years. I've seen that she can accept these situations for what they are, and adjust to cope with them. So while I know she may feel bad she is able to grasp the new circumstances and begin to immediately pursue the positive factors such as taking more time to polish and promote the entire line.

MS: So she got caught with the ticking bomb when it finally went off? But you must realize that this move, combined with DC's history over the last decade, has made the company somewhat of a joke. Before and during all the summer comic cons, people have taken a very negative attitude. First they want to know what's going on, then comment about how stupid it all seems.

MG: I can understand that. But it's my job to get the message across that this could really be a turn of good fortune, allowing us to manufacture a *better* product. We are obviously keeping our top personnel, so the line overall should improve.

Two weeks ago, the situation sounded much worse because the rumors were flying. In three months readers will see that all of DC's books are of much more consistent quality.

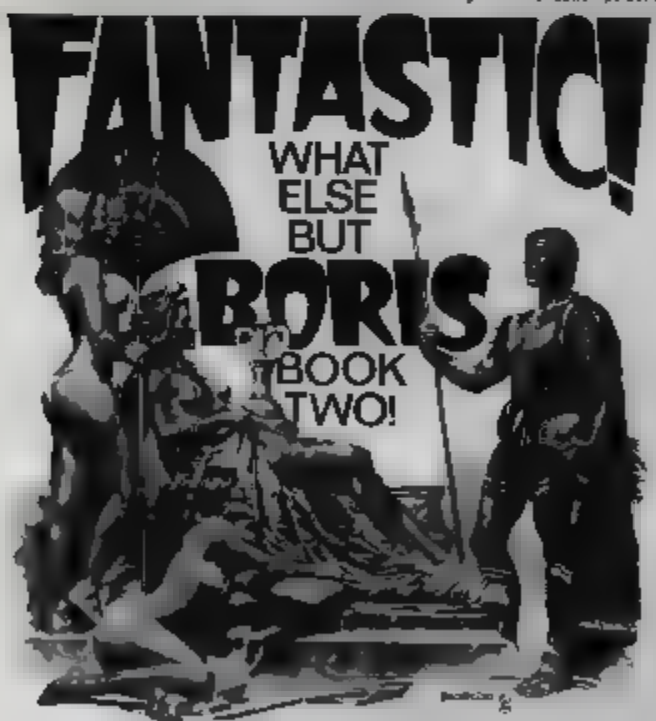
In addition, virtually all of the people we let go found work at Marvel or Warren so there aren't any starving artists prowling New York.

MS: Exactly how is DC going about improving the line?

MG: We are more or less compartmentalizing editors and characters so that they don't just randomly bounce around the titles. Julie Schwartz is overseeing the Superman books, Levitz has the Batman, Ross Andru controls Wonder Woman and The Flash (that sort of efficiency planning). We are also reassigning artists to place them on books that reflect their talents best or need a little boost.

MS: To wrap all up just what is the latest new DC line-up?

MG: OK on a monthly basis we will be producing **Action, Batman, Brave & Bold, DC Presents, Flash, Ghosts, Green Lantern, House of Mystery, Justice League, Jonah Hex, Men of War, Sgt. Rock, Superboy, Superfriends, Superman, Unknown Soldier, Warlord, Weird War, Weird Western, Wonder Woman.** In the dollar line, alternating on bi-monthly basis, are **Adventure, Detective, G.I. Combat, Superman Family, Unexpected, World's Finest.** Also to be remembered is the JLA newspaper strip, and there are always new ideas just waiting for the chance to become tomorrow's **Superman**, or at least **Harvald the Dark** number one.



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COMIXSCENE

As every fan knows by now DC Comics has undergone a tremendous purge of titles, personnel and superheroes at the direction of the executives of Warner Communications, their parent company. Exactly why and how this surgical operation was accomplished is discussed with Mike Gold in The DC Explosion: Exploded, preceding the comics news this issue. The results of this outback will speak for themselves in the months ahead as the revised DC operation hits the stands.

For a company that usually takes to the publicity bandwagon before you can say Shazam, DC has remained relatively silent about the situation except for a few explanatory announcements to their distributors in Coming Attractions (including one laughable argument concerning the ecologic repercussions of cutting down trees to print comics that their own distributor refuses to display). Not even the Wonder Woman TV series or upcoming Superman film have been receiving the type of lip-ish promotional support one would expect.

Instead everyone appears to be concentrating on accommodating the latest price and format change. Perhaps the ire and fury that originally greeted the cutback has cooled in the passage of time, or else everyone is looking forward apprehensively to another crippling winter which might just seal the fate of DC Comics for all time. There are unusual undercurrents and silent gasps revealed when discussing DC's long-range plans—almost as if they no longer have any, and the two-year contracts which were once available to nearly everyone are much harder to come by these days.

If there was ever a need for public relations at DC Comics this is it. But there too circumstances have conspired to thwart the company's best interests. Mike Gold has left his position at DC to pursue a public service position in his hometown of Chicago. The move was entirely unrelated to the DC implosion. As a result, the comics industry suddenly has a void which it never even knew existed until a few years ago and the necessary effort needed to rebound from shock in the situation is somewhat slow in coming as a result.

It would have been an easy economic and historically convenient matter for DC to have simply discarded their publicity department, but they have elected chosen to retain the editor's services, and discuss the various facets of public reactions among the existing staff. Jack C. Harris is the official contact for all fan activities and editor of Coming Attractions. Mike Barr is editing the ever-unfolding Direct Currents and individual editors are now responsible for assembling their own house ads. Political pressure may already be served by the massive Warner push being prepared for Superman—The Movie.

For the time being, we must all watch and wait. Jack Harris assures everyone that the books are looking much better because only the best artists are being assigned work. No one wants to see a Marvel monopoly fall out of the ashes of DC so there is guarded care being taken to keep Superman in competition with the Hulk on the newsstands.

The personnel involved in producing comics most affected by the splitting fates of DC's recent cutbacks were the artists and in a most unexpected twist of fate, Steve Ditko is again illustrating for Marvel Comics. On the day after the DC implosion, Mary Wolfman made his first call to Ditko, asking him to return to the bullpen after an absence of 2 years. A short time later, accompanied by Al Milgrom, Wolfman visited Ditko's studio and reached an agreement that would bring Ditko back to the company where he made his reputation and did some of his very finest work.

A fill-in issue of Captain Marvel will be Ditko's first assignment with Wolfman. Full of inter-dimensional travel tailored to accommodate the artist, perhaps to be followed by a fill-in issue of Godzilla. Steve is not going to commit himself to a series or even full-time work for Marvel just yet, and has completely rejected the possibilities of doing either Doctor Strange or Spider-Man simply because he does not wish to compete with his own work which has achieved a neo-classic status in comic history.

steve ditko spurns the spider-man

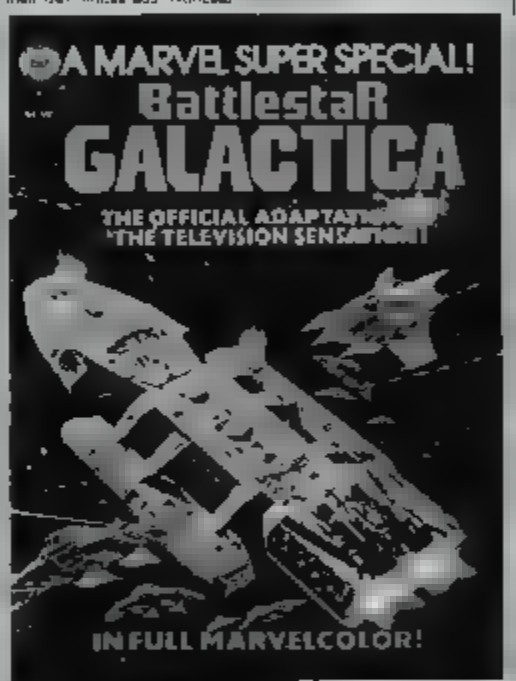
The general response among the Marvel staff to Ditko's return was ecstatic, but slightly apprehensive because of the rumors of animosity between Stan and Steve over their past handling of Spider-Man. Any such disagreement was apparently no more than a now-forgotten difference of creative opinions because the two co-creators had a long cordial discussion in Stan's office. Stan was reportedly quite pleased to have Ditko back in the Marvel family and special projects director Rick Marshall has already discussed the possibility of getting him to work on a full-color magazine project if the proper subject can be agreed upon.

Another artist on the move in comics is Gene Colan, who recently asked to be replaced on both Dracula and Howard the Duck. The reasons given were simply that he was getting tired of doing vampires and would like to enter Marvel's full-color special projects magazines because of their higher pay and prestige value. It is also known that Gene had hoped that the Howard the Duck comic and newspaper series would provide his ticket to fame and fortune—but the duck flew like a lead goose into oblivion (his newspaper strip finally expiring October 30), resulting in mixed feelings of disappointment and discontent.

Wolfman refuses to work on Dracula without Colan because he very personally feels that it is their own 'special' book and plans to wrap-up every plot and character development in issue 72 in such a way that none of his ideas can be continued or used again. Marvel is undecided about whether or not to reassign Dracula to other hands and will probably try to persuade Colan to remain on the series. There is also a possibility that the two creators will team to produce a full-color Dracula magazine, but that will depend upon Rick Marshall's schedule. Dracula's sales and Stan's approval.

Colan meanwhile appears to have found the opportunities he was looking for under Marshall's magazine division. Continuing his long association with inker colorist Tom Palmer, Colan has done three Star Lord tales, two in black & white for Marvel Preview 7 and 16, and a full-color rendition for Super Special 10.

Gene is not alone in trying to find work in these color magazines which are being



COMIXSCENE

(Thanks) the highest quality and quality control artists possible. According to Ralph Macchio, "These are our real showcase books. They may be the vanguard of a whole new wave of comics that will follow in the footsteps of the superheroes. They are receiving deluxe treatment because we feel that they are an example of what comics could be. We just received color xerox copies of a 35-page Weirdworld story from Mike Ploog written by Macchio which are dream in panel and watercolors. These pages were as beautiful and painstakingly painted that as soon as Stan saw them he called Mike to tell him how personally that's the kind of feeling we're trying to

capture for these magazines. We are doing full-process color instead of flat comic coloring because Marvel wants everyone that you can't cheat on quality and expect the art to carry its full potential impact."

The coming months Super Spectacle will include Spectacular in issue 8 a particularly important project which will also be available in a square-bound mass-market edition and a paperback, and has already been pressed for nearly a million copies. Issue 9 will be Conan's Star Lord and is scheduled to contain Ploog's Weirdworld.

Future projects being considered are adaptations of The Astonishing Hawks Stone, Black Knight, Flash Gordon and the Star Trek movie. The cycle of race oriented projects has slowed down primarily because it is not possible to make superheroes out of people as Peter Hampton and their view are not ruling or interesting enough for a full length project, than like the Beatles or Rolling Stones. There is talk however of pursuing science fiction subjects said Ashmore and Ray Shedbolt for future projects and Marvel is reportedly going to create a comic version of the Superman movie which will be released in Europe only.

The case of the Kings adaptation negotiations have unfortunately fallen through as noted earlier, with one source quoting the last mentioned is dropping his being considered around $50,000. Part of the reason for backing away from the Kings was that Prang's Weirdworld was more enough to Middle Earth that Marvel didn't really feel it necessary to buy the original.

There is also an outsider possibility that Marvel will not only buy the film rights to Stanley Kubrick's upcoming The Shining but that the original novel's author Stephen King will do the writing of the comic adaptation. King is a longtime comic book fan and in fact had his very first short story published many years ago in a fanzine titled Stories of Suspense whose editor was Stan Lee.

Spiderman

The Fantastic Four is pulling itself together after its controversial issue 200th issue who can forget Reed Richards being tongue lashing out and eyes bulging in a graphically right close-up in search of another long and complicated story line which will happen to tie in with another long and complicated story line being started in Spiderman's other regular comic titles. The futures are in the FF and the Sphere is in chaos and everybody is on a galactic quest to the home planet of the original Nova Prime. The separate stories will be read together or apart but both lead up to a dazzling with another familiar Marvel character who spends a lot of time hanging around space-corners and interfering with people's private lives.

Spider-Man is taking a turn for the worse intentionally according to Spiderman as that he can return to being the misunderstood and alienated young adult with problems Stan says that the present popular press boy Parker image is running counter the original as Orbig promises

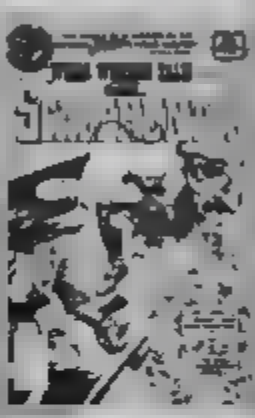
the series which was predicated almost entirely upon Peter's problems adjusting to society. Apparently Marvel's pre-eminent hero with problems is having too much fun as Spider-Man and consequently be presented to a Jonah Jameson and a bank for (at least) during Aim to make a number of very serious and important appointments which result in months of worry. Peter Parker will soon be produced soon from the Daily Bugle by a rival publisher and guess what? The 200th issue is either eight

The reaction to the Wednesday Marvel movies began with Spider-Man has apparently been received quite well so many books are currently in production Spiderman is already at work writing a Fantastic Four issue which he is co-editing and Lee featuring an appearance by (who else?) Dr Doom. The Hulk and Captain America vs the Red Skull are also in the works, paired by Kirkman and Ol-

written by Ron Goulart under the supervision of Joe Sinn.

A DC Lee Week is going to Kirkman and Spider-Man as starting to the good old days by boldly reintroducing the Superman series to mega-mild mannered reporter Clark Kent of the Daily Planet simply because that is the character the whole world knows and is going see in the upcoming film Jimmy Olsen Lois Lane and Perry White are also come back (on whether they have been hiding all explained under the cover) Mad Hatter Kent and Jane have been the jobs of being both a newspaper reporter and a TV anchorperson. The original idea updating Superman to fit into a television society seemed like a good idea several years ago but too many people including the new producers and director know how to accept the Kent. Part of the attraction of comic heroes is their schizophrenic personalities a moment the fumbling ever man on the street and the next a bulging muscled HERO who can do anything and everyman always had that aspect of being in competition with another part for the love of Lois and All these concepts have been so changed and lost in recent years at DC's inability to treat Marvel's characterization standards that Wein's latest outline for Superman's future sounds almost original—even if

news/views/reviews from the world of comics



It only works

Lee will be pursuing the career of Clark Kent Superman news paper reporter in the pages of the Superman magazine. Cary Bates will continue to deal with the book-a-day TV newscaster in Action. One of the first of Lee's projects calls for Superman to meet with a revived Robin and Thorn followed by a tale into Fawcett Mary Crosses involving Brainiac, Lyman and Bizarro. This story will lead directly into issue 338 the 40th Anniversary issue in which the battle city of Rainbow plays a large part.

In Batman Lee will be bringing Hawkman a old foe The Gentleman Ghost back in the same issue that his Nemesis returns. He takes along with

Ross Andru appears to be getting into the new editorial position despite DC's recent turmoil and is even finding time to do cover layouts for not only his own books but on occasion-al outside assignment for Julie Schwartz. Intel

Mike Kaluta is keeping active providing DC with covers for House of Mystery 287 and 288 and several interior pin ups for the newly consolidated Unexpected. Time and opportunity may also make him the cover artist for this book as well-particularly on the entertaining months in which the Doomsday into Nightmare segment of the book is dominant.

Plans to fully exploit the publicity surrounding the Christ-

as Superman on location in Greece. The Justice League newspaper strip has already been programmed to climax entirely upon Superman and Luthor during the week of the film's release and at least seven particular Superman publications will be produced by Warner Publishing including a curious portfolio of twelve or eighteen or twenty-one production paintings supposedly used the way Ralph McQuarrie's Star Wars illustrations were to help the director visualize key scenes and sets. Oddly enough Warner Publishing's own advertising is uncertain about how many there are actually going to be and whether the paintings have even been completed yet.

Superman movie are progressing well despite the film's expected blockbuster impact the shooting script apparently is still being amended or rewritten so that the more outrageous situations remain won't appear.

According to one source at Warner Donner has used a unique approach to filming the three distinct portions of the film dealing with Krypton Smallville and Metropolis. Based primarily on atmosphere and camera technique each setting will be unique and stylistically unique. Krypton is science-fictionary with mechanistic and the camera lines angles which depart further and further from the [illegible]

a new superhero deal by Jim Sutton Then the Defender Man will go on a daily schedule of A Caper a Day Keeps the Batman Away Following that will be a two-part tale of Two Face with a guest appearance by Ruby Forsday.

For the Deadman series in Adventure Comics Len will start with Garcia-Lopez and Dick Giordano to wrap the long-

deadman lives again!

standing circus murder storyline in a tale originally intended to fill 25 pages of Showcase. With those loose ends taken care of Deadman will go to war against the sequel of Assassins a plotline inspired by the three short Deadman stories that appeared in Aquaman by Neal Adams several years ago.

Detective Comics will celebrate its 40th anniversary with issue 483 by featuring an O'Neil-Newton-Adkins story-in all about a Crime Alley. Approximately the same time Brave and Bold #10 will be ready with a story titled Batman and P a tale teaming the caped crusader with a hero he has never worked with before.

The [illegible] a story a 30-to-size 94 page Superman magazine on the works at DC pitted by Jack Harris which will be 80 per cent photos and storyboards and 20 per cent comics all designed to explaining effects how the comic character originates and evolves creation to the film hero. Printed on quality white paper with lots of color this magazine will be released December 14 at the same time as the Superman I movie is opened on target to coincide with the film's premiere.

Finally latest word on Superman: The Movie is that director Richard Donner is still at work putting last minute touches to the final cut to make sure that

Some time is more forthcoming and personally distressed to learn of Mr. and Mrs. Kent when the camera moves among the people leisurely 40s style panning of lips and emotional close-ups. Marcello's contemporary look and tailored 4-H the Superman segment a head-personal display gimmicks and tricks the camera cuts quickly and economically edge into the more action Edge and Dinga sophisticate of chases in the streets and slow motion.

Nearly all the live-action footing for the follow-up movie has been completed but work has not proceed on it for awhile and yet like the first part the sequel calls for plenty of special effects the headache that has already cost millions of dollars over budget and nearly a year's time. The problems seem to revolve around the flying sequences and the ultimate solution appears to involve a 80 man production line carefully-sketching Christopher Reeve's supporting wires out of every frame of film.

A lot of time money and attention is being lavished and focused on Superman- The films such as Close Encounters found itself in the spotlight last year Luckily Steven Spielberg delivered the goods to the tune of well over $100 million. How could the likes of Steel possibly do less?

THINK YOU KNOW WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN? NOT UNTIL YOU'VE SEEN THIS BOOK!

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UNSEEN SHADOWS

Unseen Shadows is a book of revelations of the secret life of the pulp era's premiere Master of Darkness, unveiled by Shadow paperback cover painter, Steranko. **Unseen Shadows** is a 84-page collection of 50 extremely tight and detailed pencil renderings which were the preliminary roughs for the finished Shadow paperback cover paintings. Every drawing is reproduced in it's *original size*, and is carefully drawn in varying gray pencil-shaded tones to closely approximate the full range of light, dark and textured values of the final paintings. This is the Shadow that only the artist and the art director usually see, because many changes are made during the actual rendering. Nearly half of these drawings contain designs and concepts which *never appeared on any Shadow paperback cover!* There is an introduction and illustrated explanation of *How I Paint the Shadow* by Steranko, and an Afterword by Walter Gibson. The entire volume is appropriately printed in midnight black, and both covers are 8x10½" reproductions of the two most action-filled and pulp-flavored paintings, in full-color, without type. **Unseen Shadows** is a collector's dream, available in a regular paperbound edition for just $4.00. There is also a *deluxe hardback edition* of **Unseen Shadows**, limited to 325 copies (the exact number of **Shadow** pulps originally published) specially signed by Steranko, for $12.00.

FANDOM'S COMICS

The Comic Crusader Storybook is Marty Greim's magnum opus tribute to the fan art and creativity that spanned over a decade-and-a-half of characters and creations to pay homage to the great Marvel heroes of the 60s. This *brand-new* volume is 168-pages in length, with never-before-published art by Steranko, Adams, Adkins, Ditko, Sutton, Statton, Nebres and others, illustrating such unforgettable fandom heroes as Dr. Weird, The Eye, The Defender, Goodguy, The Eclipse and The Shade. Over three years in the making, **The Comic Crusader Storybook** also features full color covers by Joe Simnott and Dick Giordano—a truly massive spectacle of organized fan activity, with a cast of hundreds, for $8.50.

FRANK BRUNNER

After Image—an impressive new portfolio of illustrations, paintings and never-before-published art by master fantasist Frank Brunner. Packed with 52 pages of barbarians, sorcerers, wild women and unbridled imagination, **After Image** also features six pages of full-color paintings which are printed here for the *first time ever*. There's also a wealth of original art, tidbits of Frank's favorite comic work, an up-to-date checklist of Brunner's accomplishments, and pages of running commentary in which the artist reflects on the success or failure of individual works, all collected underneath attractive and distinctive full-color covers. An impressive portfolio for one of comic's most popular and talented artists, available for just $5.00.

MARVEL INDEXES

These two books are the latest additions to the complete Marvel Comics Index series, both focusing on the heroes from **Tales to Astonish. Volume 7A** features every comic, cover and fact dealing with the incredible Hulk. **Book 7B** does the same for the Sub-Mariner's many appearances, and features a cover based on an unpublished Bill Everett layout from the Golden Age. Both feature full-color covers, and are available for just $3.95 each.

BERNI WRIGHTSON

Presenting! A brand-new collection of all-old reprints by the master of the macabre, Berni Wrightson—**Tales You've Seen Before...Back For More**. Now, in a single 84-page, high-quality black and white volume are seven long out-of-print horror, horror and science-fiction stories from the defunct pages of **Web of Horror, Bedtime Stories**, and assorted fanzines. Written and drawn by Wrightson, with an introduction by Eric Kimball, **Back For More** is a gold-plated opportunity to acquire these classic comics at a bargain price—just $3.95. Both covers are in full-color, and the front is an *original* painting, so that Wrightson fans will have to buy the book anyway. Diabolically clever isn't it?

SILVER SURFER

The Surfer is back, and we've got him! Now, Marvel's gleaming rider of the star-ways is available in a movie-length epic produced by the team that originally created him! In their first collaboration in years, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby have combined their talents in this titanic 100-page adventure starring the Silver Surfer, the awesome Galactus and a host of fantastic allies and adversaries. Not a reprint book, or a collection of old Surfer tales, this new *full-color* volume is completely original and created especially for this edition. Here is the Surfer at the height of his power—poetic, provocative and supremely powerful. **The Silver Surfer** is $4.95.

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- ☐ Art of Neal Adams 2 — $3.95 plus .60 postage
- ☐ Neal Adams Portfolio 1 — $5.00 plus .50 postage
- ☐ Adams Monsters Portfolio — $3.95 plus .50 postage

BORG
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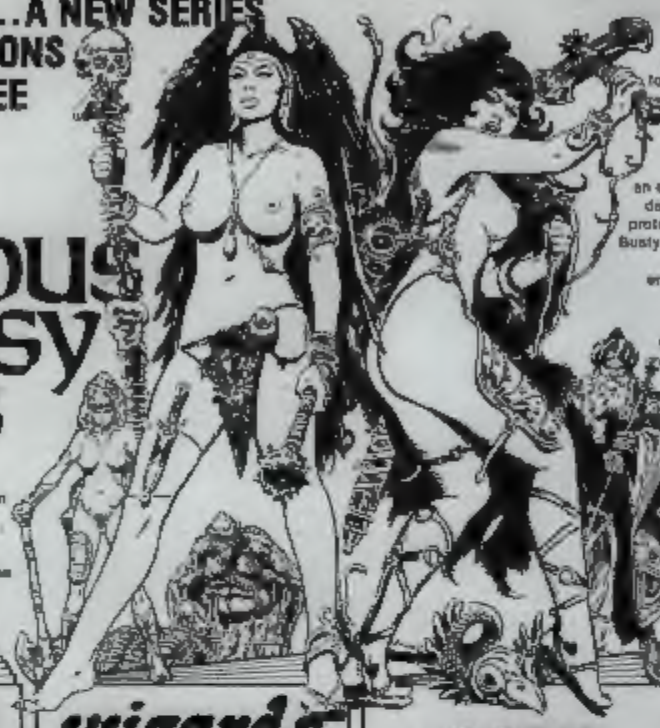

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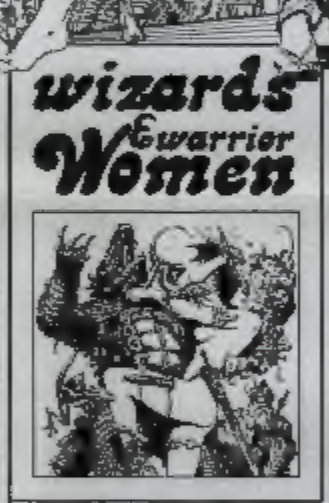

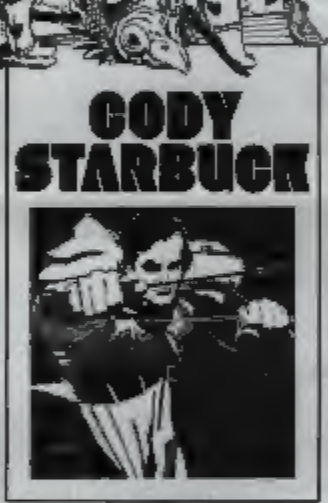

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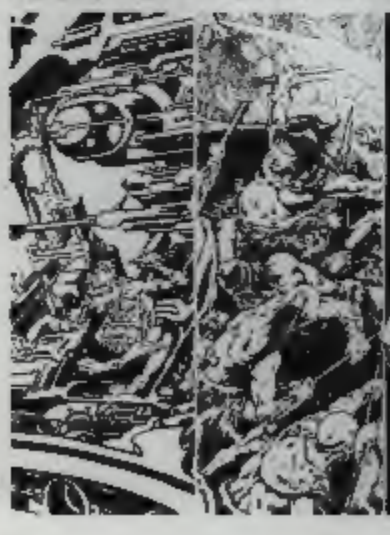

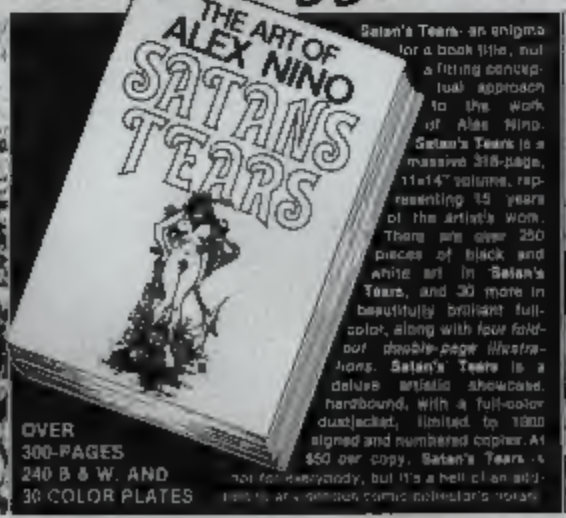

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